

**PERSPECTIVES ON
GURU NANAK**

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PERSPECTIVES ON GURU NANAK

seminar papers

edited by

HARBANS SINGH



**PUBLICATION BUREAU
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**

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**GURU GOBIND SINGH DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**

1999
Third Edition : 1100
Price : 350-00

Published by Prof. Ranbir Singh, M.A., Ph.D., Registrar, Punjabi University,
Patiala and printed by M/s Ram Printograph, New Delhi.

PREFACE

The International Seminar on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak from September 3-5, 1969, brought together on the campus of the Punjabi University, Patiala, scholars from all over the world. This seminar was one of many occasions that celebrated the five-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion. The papers in this volume were presented and discussed by the members of the seminar during the three days of diligent work together.

The diversity of the papers in this volume is evident. They range from traditional historical and philosophical studies to the latest forms of sociological, linguistic and structural analyses. They touch every aspect of Guru Nanak's life. The articles explore the parallels between the age of Guru Nanak and our own. Yet the historians also remind us of the distance humanity has travelled in the five hundred years since the birth of Guru Nanak in medieval India. Guru Nanak's message has been studied in the context of the modern world and its contemporary relevance pondered. Several of the essays elucidate the conceptual framework of Guru Nanak's thought. What is the common core in all this work?

In the first place, the seminar revealed the vitality of the faith born out of Guru Nanak's teaching and the growing interest in its founder throughout the world. The learned debate, often sharply joined, showed the vitality and depth of interest in Guru Nanak and his continuing meaning. The gloomy predictions of the last century of the decline and ultimate disappearance of Sikhism have been proved unfounded. Max Arthur Macauliffe, the great historian of Sikhism, hurried to his task of recording the history and teachings of the Sikh religion, for he believed that its living traditions would soon be lost forever. Macauliffe's work, which appeared in 1909, was to serve, in his view, as a kind of monument to a great and noble religion that was fast sinking to extinction. These Quincentenary essays, sixty years later, show Sikhism to be a vital tradition open to scholarly analysis and capable of widespread religious influence. It is a faith not only vitally in touch with its past, but also creatively engaged with the present.

Secondly, these papers show the places in which work remains to be done on understanding Guru Nanak and the Sikh religion. Several of the papers are methodological in nature pointing out fresh approaches to finding the present reality and historical roots of Sikhism and its founder. Analytical techniques of western thought need to be joined with the

detailed and extensive knowledge of the traditional languages of India before firm conclusions can be reached. These papers are a call to a new generation of scholars who will come under the discipline of both traditional and modern critical scholarship.

As these papers demonstrate, the work of Guru Nanak can be placed under various categories. He was the first Guru and founder of Sikhism, a poet, a wandering religious teacher, a social reformer, and a householder. However, in order to employ any of these titles correctly, Guru Nanak's unique religious experience must be acknowledged as formative and determinate. The experience of one God, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and beyond all form and name, determined every thought and deed of Guru Nanak. The social doctrine denying caste which Guru Nanak preached must be seen in the light of his experience of a God before whom all men are equal. His wanderings should be acknowledged as an attempt to engage in dialogue with others and to spread his belief in one God who teaches tolerance. Guru Nanak's later life as a householder should be perceived as his compliance of God's command to all men to act responsibly within the world. Finally, the *bani* Guru Nanak composed and the passing of his Guruship to his successor can only be understood as devotional acts meant to instil among his followers a continued dedication to God. Certainly it cannot be denied that social, economic and political factors as well as the various religious doctrines of Guru Nanak's period helped to form his vocabulary and fields of activity, but none of these factors can be said to be in any manner as determinate as Guru Nanak's unique and vivid continuing experience of God. It is this element of the sacred which, despite their various backgrounds, religions, and fields of study, unites the contributors of this volume in perceiving Guru Nanak as one of the great religious figures of mankind.

This is not a volume to be read straight through from beginning to end. Rather it is a book in which to dip at various points as interest inclines the reader. The opening addresses will provide an orientation to the discussion and to the meaning of Guru Nanak. Then it will be possible for the reader to move to the essays with a clearer grasp of their purpose and inspiration. It is acknowledged that this work, with its large number of articles, is somewhat uneven both in style and scholarship. This unevenness is overcome by the range of opinions and views contained in these essays which should provide the reader with a deeper and more thorough appreciation and understanding of Sikhism as a whole, and more particularly, the figure of Guru Nanak.

It was a fitting tribute to Guru Nanak that this seminar could be held at the Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan, named after the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus, and dedicated to the study of all religions in the attitude of tolerance and dialogue taught by Guru Nanak. It is hoped that this seminar, representing the collective work of scholars from various lands and religious traditions, contributed to inter-religious understanding, and that this resulting volume will further knowledge in comparative religions.

The publication of these essays poses an interesting speculation. What

would be the outcome of a similar seminar convened five or ten centuries hence? Certainly some of the outstanding questions will have been answered. New questions will have arisen. But of one thing, one believes, we can be sure. Guru Nanak will continue to be part of the ongoing concerns of humankind as we move into a future marked by peril and promise.

We wish to gratefully thank the individual contributors, some of whom travelled great distances, for their efforts in deciphering the many facets of Guru Nanak's beliefs and actions. The presence of Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith was an inspiration. He is a leading philosopher and theoretician in the field of comparative study of religions. The Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies at the Punjabi University has depended on his counsel from the very beginning and our debt to him is immense. Gratitude is due to distinguished men in the public life of the nation such as Dr Y. B. Chavan, Union Home Minister, who presided over the inaugural ceremonies; Sardar Swaran Singh, Union Minister of Defence, who opened the exhibition of paintings on Guru Nanak; Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, Union Minister of Education, and Dr D. S. Kothari, Chairman, University Grants Commission, who chaired seminar sessions; and Sardar Gurnam Singh, Chief Minister of the Punjab, who performed the opening ceremony of the Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan and gave whole-hearted support to the seminar. Sardar Kirpal Singh Narang, Vice-Chancellor of the Punjabi University, was the vital force behind the seminar and provided most significant and distinguished leadership. Dr K. L. Seshagiri Rao and his colleagues in the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies as many others from the University faculty and administrative staff helped with arrangements. I must especially acknowledge the help I received from Dr Kishan Singh Bedi, Retired Joint Director of Agriculture, Punjab Government, and Shri Sardar Singh Bhatia, Senior Research Fellow in the Department of the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, in preparing the volume for publication. Rev. Anand Spencer prepared the index and I must thank him for the assistance so cheerfully rendered. Sardar Hazara Singh supervised the production of the book for which I express my appreciation to him.

Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan
Punjabi University
Patiala

HARBANS SINGH

CONTENTS

I	THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S WELCOME ADDRESS :		
	<i>Sardar Kirpal Singh Narang</i>	.. ..	1
II	THE CHANCELLOR'S INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS :		
	<i>Dr D. C. Pavate</i>	.. ..	7
III	INAUGURAL ADDRESS :		
	<i>Dr Yeshwantrao Balwantrao Chavan</i>	..	11
IV	GURU NANAK AS HISTORICAL MEMORY AND CONTINUING REALITY :		
	<i>Harbans Singh</i>	.. ..	15
V	THE RELIGIOUS, THE SACRED AND THE HOLY :		
	GURU NANAK AND SECULARISM :		
	<i>David B. Harned</i>	.. ..	30
VI	GURU NANAK'S CONCEPT OF NATURE :		
	<i>Kapur Singh</i>	.. ..	45
VII	THE CONCEPT OF SAHAJ IN GURU NANAK'S THEOLOGY — ITS ANTECEDANTS :		
	<i>Niharranjan Ray</i>	.. ..	57
VIII	THE CONCEPT OF MAYA IN GURU NANAK'S PHILOSOPHY :		
	<i>Buddha Prakash</i>	.. ..	71
IX	THE PHILOSOPHY OF NAME :		
	<i>R. C. Pandeya</i>	.. ..	76
X	THE NATURE OF GOD :		
	<i>Geoffrey Parrinder</i>	.. ..	83
XI	SPEAKING ABOUT GOD :		
	<i>Eliot Deutsch</i>	.. ..	93
XII	GURU NANAK'S VIEW OF GOD :		
	<i>A. H. Ansari</i>	.. ..	98
XIII	GURU NANAK'S CONCEPT OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY :		
	<i>Surinder Singh Kohli</i>	.. ..	105
XIV	AFFINITIES BETWEEN GURU NANAK AND JESUS CHRIST :		
	<i>Richard V. DeSmet</i>	.. ..	110
XV	THERE IS NONE BUT ONE GOD :		
	<i>Roma Chaudhuri</i>	.. ..	119
XVI	SOME RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS IN HINDUISM AND SIKHISM : GURU AND SABDA :		
	<i>Sobharani Basu</i>	.. ..	124
XVII	THE SECULAR RELIGION OF GURU NANAK :		
	<i>John B. Chethimattam</i>	.. ..	136
XVIII	GURU NANAK AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM :		
	<i>Fauja Singh</i>	.. ..	141

XIX	SOME SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS IDEALS OF GURU NANAK :			
	<i>K. A. Nizami</i>	..	..	151
XX	ETHICAL ASPECTS OF GURU NANAK'S THOUGHT :			
	<i>Sohan Singh</i>	..	..	155
XXI	I SEE ONLY A MAN :			
	<i>Marcus Braybrooke</i>	..	..	164
XXII	THE MYSTIC TEACHINGS OF GURU NANAK :			
	<i>J. R. Puri</i>	..	..	170
XXIII	INDIAN SUFISM AND GURU NANAK :			
	<i>S. A. A. Rizvi</i>	..	..	191
XXIV	A STUDY OF GURU NANAK'S TEACHING IN RELATION TO THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL TRADITION :			
	<i>Gurbachan Singh Talib</i>	..	..	223
XXV	GURU NANAK AND THE SIDDHAS :			
	<i>Bhai Jodh Singh</i>	..	..	269
XXVI	BUDDHISM AND SIKHISM :			
	<i>L. M. Joshi</i>	..	..	288
XXVII	MUSLIM ATTITUDE TOWARDS GURU NANAK :			
	<i>Mushir-ul-Haq</i>	..	..	292
XXVIII	SIKHISM AND YOGA : A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF GURU NANAK'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE YOGIS :			
	<i>Trilochan Singh</i>	..	..	296
XXIX	GURU NANAK AND THE HINDU HERITAGE :			
	<i>K. L. Seshagiri Rao</i>	..	..	310
XXX	GURU NANAK AND HIS MESSAGE :			
	<i>J. J. Karam</i>	..	..	313
XXXI	ELEMENTS OF SIKH CULTURE :			
	<i>Avtar Singh</i>	..	..	322
XXXII	GURU NANAK AND CEYLON :			
	<i>Saddhamangala Karunaratna</i>	..	..	326
XXXIII	GURU NANAK AND HIS NINE SUCCESSORS :			
	<i>Sher Singh Sher</i>	..	..	328
XXXIV	THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS :			
	<i>Kenneth W. Morgan</i>	..	..	337
XXXV	A DIALECTICAL EXCURSUS ON THE UNITY OR PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS :			
	<i>R. Panikkar</i>	..	..	349
XXXVI	PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING GURU NANAK'S HYMNS :			
	<i>Khushwant Singh</i>	..	..	356
XXXVII	THE HISTORIAN, THE GURU AND THE CHRIST :			
	<i>Donald G. Dawe</i>	..	..	360
XXXVIII	HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE STUDY OF INDIAN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS : ONE			

	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GURU NANAK'S ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION :	
	<i>J. B. Carman</i>	373
XXXIX	THE POETRY OF GURU NANAK :	
	<i>Darshan Singh Maini</i>	381
XL	SEER, SAINT AND REDEEMER :	
	<i>Harnam Singh Shan</i>	392
XLI	GURU NANAK'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE :	
	<i>Bhag Singh</i>	407
XLII	JAPJI AND UNIVERSAL MYSTICISM :	
	<i>K. Seshadri</i>	413
XLIII	GURU NANAK'S IMPACT ON HISTORY :	
	<i>Ganda Singh</i>	418
XLIV	GURU NANAK AND HIS MESSAGE — SAINTLY RELEVANCE AND CHALLENGE :	
	<i>Amiya Chakravarty</i>	428
XLV	GURU NANAK — THE PARALLEL REFORMATIONS :	
	<i>P. M. Wylam</i>	447
XLVI	GURU NANAK AND THE PROBLEMS OF HIS AGE :	
	<i>A. C. Banerjee</i>	465
XLVII	THE SERMON AT SULTANPUR :	
	<i>Taran Singh</i>	482
XLVIII	THE PERSPECTIVE OF GURU NANAK :	
	<i>S. S. Raghavachar</i>	489
XLIX	GURU NANAK'S COMMENT ON THE VAISHNAVA LILA :	
	<i>Norvin Hein</i>	493
L	THE FIVE SYMBOLS OF SIKHISM :	
	<i>J. P. Singh Uberoi</i>	502
LI	TAGORE ON THE SIKHS :	
	<i>Amalendu Bose</i>	514
LII	GURU NANAK TO THE GURU GRANTH :	
	<i>A. R. Wadia</i>	521
LIII	RELIGION AND PROGRESS : THE RECORD OF SIKHISM :	
	<i>K. Ishwarn</i>	524
LIV	AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUCTURAL STUDY OF JAPUJI :	
	<i>Harjeet Singh Gill</i>	528
	PARTICIPANTS	535
	INDEX	541

I

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S WELCOME ADDRESS

SARDAR KIRPAL SINGH NARANG

Mr President, Mr Chancellor, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, Sardar Swaran Singh, Mr Chief Minister, Maharaja Sahib, honoured guest-participants, ladies and gentlemen :

I extend to you in the name of the Punjabi University and from myself personally a very warm and cordial welcome to this opening session of the Guru Nanak seminar. One overwhelming feeling at this moment is that of humble thankfulness. In scholarly participation and in the association with it of men eminent in the public life of the nation this event has been singularly fortunate. I tender to our esteemed guests and distinguished scholars my deep gratitude for their kindness in responding so generously to our invitation. Their presence here is heartening for us. It is evidence of the growing interest in the kind of academic pursuit in which this new institution on our campus represents a modest beginning. It also implies a fitting recognition of the great and inspiring theme to which this learned convocation is committed. A very special debt of gratitude is owed to our guest of honour, the Union Home Minister, for his graciousness in making time to be here this morning and associate himself with these inauguration ceremonies. Much gratitude is, likewise, due to the Union Ministers, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao and Sardar Swaran Singh, our Chancellor, Dr D. C. Pavate, our Chief Minister, Sardar Gurnam Singh, His Highness the Maharaja Sahib of Patiala and other friendly guests. Before proceeding further, I wish also to take this opportunity to render homage to the memory of the great Master for whose 500th birth anniversary this programme was planned.

The Punjabi University feels privileged in being able to sponsor this seminar in observance of this momentous anniversary. Under the charter of this university, we were charged with the responsibility of promoting the language, culture and literature of the region to which it belongs. To this end, it set up certain agencies and departments such as the Department of Translation, the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, the Department of Linguistics, the Department of Sri Guru

Granth Sahib Studies and the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies. This last named is the most recent of these and, in certain ways, most exciting. For one thing, this is the first department of its kind in an Indian university.

The study of religion as a university discipline is of modern origin and, so far as our own country is concerned, almost non-existent. This, however, is a subject which is of compelling importance and goes to the very roots of human culture. Religion, in spite of the divisions and conflicts which stain certain periods of its history, has been the most significant humanizing agent in the civilization of man. For the individual it is the source of moral insight and ethical action: it touches the higher key in his nature, opens his mind to verities beyond this world of physical phenomena and provides a point of integration to his personality. In this age of scientific discovery and invention and technological virtuosity man's religious faith is facing severe challenges; and yet it has proved its fundamental relevance to the human situation. Values and standards given to man by religion still have their validity. In fact, the present dilemmas and hazards with which human society is confronted today arise from the fact that the hold on those principles is gradually slipping. The restoration of these values will bring mankind that focus of security which it so badly needs today. In any case, the investigation of the inner reality and intuitions of religion which has been the most significant single factor in shaping the civilization of mankind is a legitimate intellectual and academic pursuit worthy of the attention of any community engaged in the quest of truth and knowledge.

At the time when our modern universities began to be established, religious studies were not admitted into the academic curriculum. But since Independence, leaders of government and education have been seriously considering ways and means of giving this study its proper place in our educational structure and bringing to our youth its healthful influences. Committees were appointed by the Government of India to go into the question. The University Grants Commission also took initiative in this matter. In the year of the Tercentenary of Guru Gobind Singh's birth, i.e., 1966-67, this university made a formal proposal for the establishment of a Department of Religious Studies. I was fortunate to have met during my visit to the United States in 1966, Dr Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Director, Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University. The idea took form as I visited the very fascinating institution he heads. His own deep involvement with the subject was inspiring. When I put up my plans to the University Grants Commission, the Government of India, the Punjab Government, and public institutions such as the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, the response was more than favourable. In the scheme the university had drawn up, it was proposed to undertake the study of five major religious traditions, namely,

Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. The University Grants Commission and the Punjab Government helped with funds. Their continuing support has been an important factor in the realization of the undertaking.

The building designed for housing this religious centre seeks to concretize the concept underlying the project. The motifs of the lotus and the pool, of the boat and the worldly ocean, of the eternal flame, of the white of marble, of the heaven-gazing arches, the sculpture and so on, have been used, to what effect it is for our honoured visitors to judge. Similarly, use has been made of the number "Five" which has special sanctity in our religious traditions, especially Sikh and Muslim.

This edifice conceived in 1966-67 was dedicated to the memory of Guru Gobind Singh. It was the Tercentenary year, and the set-up, then in the process of establishment, could not have been more appropriately designated. Guru Gobind Singh epitomized, in his life and poetry, the essence and universality of religious truth. To quote from one of his hymns:

He is in the temple as He is in the mosque:
 He is in the Hindu worship as He is in the Muslim prayer;
 Men are one though they appear different,
 Gods and demons who guard the treasures of the god of riches, the musicians
 celestial
 The Hindus and the Muslims are all one,
 Have each the habits of a different environment,
 But all men have the same eyes, the same body,
 The same form compounded of the same four elements,
 Earth, air, fire and water,
 Thus the Abhekh of the Hindus and the Allah of the Muslims are one,
 The Koran and the Puranas praise the same Lord.
 They are all of one form,
 The One Lord made them all.

The cornerstone of the Bhavan was laid in December 1967 by India's late President, Dr Zakir Husain, who exemplified in his person the highest traditions of learning, culture and tolerance. To his revered memory we hereby pay our respectful tribute.

To our present generation belongs the privilege of commemorating an important anniversary—the fifth birth centennial of Guru Nanak, seer and teacher, prophet and preceptor. As witness to Reality, he stands in human history as one by whom mankind has been able to know God more fully. He was the harbinger of a new age in man's religiosity. Through him has come to mankind a vivid message of love, unity and equality. Our century is one deeply concerned with increasing understanding among men and easing the tensions that separate them. Religiously inspired hatred we now can recognize as a denial of religion, not its fulfilment. Religious zeal, modern man knows, must be turned to deepening our commitment to human betterment and

harmony. Such concerns were certainly not a part of the sixteenth century world in which Guru Nanak lived. But he set out on his teaching mission with the pronouncement: "There is no Hindu and there is no Musalman." In saying this he was pointing to the essential unity of men and calling them to a fraternity, a religion large enough to embrace all and inviting them to search for that spiritually vital core which lay beyond all particularisms. In this sense, his message has great modern relevance. It is, however, regrettable that scholarly endeavour towards comprehending and interpreting it has so far been extremely meagre.

The Quinquecentennial now has stirred many a mind. In the Punjab and in India as a whole and, in fact, round the globe wherever there are the Guru's followers and admirers, plans are being worked out to mark the remembrance in a befitting and meaningful manner. The Punjabi University, in its various departments, has undertaken several academic and literary programmes. Foremost among these is this conference under the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies. The plan goes back to the seminar on the study of religions in Indian universities which was held in Bangalore in September 1967. There I received support from many distinguished scholars who had assembled for that very interesting and productive meeting. We were fortunate to enlist their cooperation and of others whom we contacted subsequently.

As it is, there are nearly 60 scholars taking part in this study, 15 of them from universities abroad. Among the foreign countries represented are the U.S.A., the U.K., Australia, Ceylon, and Canada. About 40 papers have been received. These have been divided into five broad sections. The first section will be on "Philosophy and Message of Guru Nanak." It will be presided by the eminent Indian educationist, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, now the Union Minister for Education and Youth Services. The second section will address itself to "Mystical Tradition." The President will be the distinguished educationist and scientist, Dr D. S. Kothari, Chairman of the University Grants Commission. The third section will be on "Guru Nanak: Dialogue of Religions." Dr Amiya Chakravarty, the well-known critic and scholar, who is now Professor of World Religions, State University, New Paltz, New York, U.S.A., will be the chairman. The next section will devote itself to the subject of "Guru Nanak: Society and Culture." The chairman will be Professor Cantwell Smith, who is the Director of Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University and who by his most thoughtful and effective writings on the theme of faith and understanding is making a new and positive contribution to the intellectual culture of the age. The last section will be on "Guru Nanak: Language and Literature," chaired by the well-known educator and Islamacist, Professor M. Mujeeb, Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia.

The most challenging subject to which the seminar is dedicated has not been exposed to such broad-based and high-level scholarship before, and, I have no doubt, the results will be more than satisfying. The papers along with the discussions that they give rise to will be published by the university. I must thank most heartily the learned participants for their valued cooperation and their labour of love.

The seminar was made possible by a grant of Rs. 1 lakh sanctioned by the Punjab Government towards its expenses. I must also make acknowledgement of the kindly help and personal interest in this conference of our esteemed Chancellor, Dr D. C. Pavate, the Governor of Punjab, and our Chief Minister, Sardar Gurnam Singh. The University Grants Commission also sanctioned us a sum of Rs. 25,000 and we are grateful to it and to its chairman, Dr D. S. Kothari, for this help. I also venture to hope that, if the chairman of the University Grants Commission and the Union Education Minister find that this seminar has yielded some fruitful results and has succeeded to some extent in stimulating interest in religious studies, they will help this university and others in further similar enterprise.

On this occasion will also be released some publications of the university. The Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies has been working on introductory books, one each on the five major religious faiths. The books are now ready and will be released at the function this morning by Dr V. K. R. V. Rao. Another publication to be released will be *Vichar Kosh*, a dictionary of the thought contained in the *Guru Granth*, which has been prepared by the Department of Guru Granth Sahib Studies, under the guidance of Dr Taran Singh. Tomorrow, Dr D. S. Kothari, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, will release the Punjabi version of Shri Vinoba Bhavaji's commentary, in Hindi, on the *Japji*. This is an eloquent and masterly presentation of Sikh thought and we are grateful to Shri Vinoba Bhavaji for permitting us to make a Punjabi translation of his work. We now propose securing English translation rights. Tomorrow will also be released another publication of the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies entitled *Mahatma Gandhi and C. F. Andrews: A Dialogue Between Christianity and Hinduism*, written by Dr K. L. Seshagiri Rao. A special number of *Punjab Past and Present* devoted to Guru Nanak, edited by Dr Ganda Singh, will also be released on this occasion. This special issue reproduces exhaustively the source material on the life of the Guru as available in English, Persian, Punjabi, Urdu, Marathi and Oriya. We shall also be bringing out shortly a Life of Guru Nanak in English, Punjabi and Hindi, written by Sardar Harbans Singh. He worked on this book at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University.

I should like to thank all those who partook in this scholarly programme, especially Dr D. S. Maini, Dr Fauja Singh, Dr K. L. Seshagiri

Rao and Dr Taran Singh. I must also mention in this behalf the contribution made by Sardar Hazara Singh, the Production Officer, and Sardar Kuldip Singh Sethi, Manager of the Press.

As has been indicated in the programme, this inaugural session will be followed by the opening by Sardar Swaran Singh, Union Defence Minister, of an exhibition of relics and paintings connected with the life of Guru Nanak. The exhibition will comprise manuscripts of old Janamsakhis and some original paintings and also photographs of some rare paintings on Guru Nanak. The earliest of these paintings is dated A.D. 1658, falling within the period of Guru Har Rai. Also on display will be maps marking the journeys of Guru Nanak and a genealogical table tracing the line of his descendants.

Before I close, I must express my appreciation of the great job of work in preparation of this meeting by the university faculty and staff in the administrative and engineering wings. The Registrar, Sardar Amrik Singh, and the Executive Engineer, Sardar Jagjit Singh Kohli, took on more than their fair share of the burden. Owing to the short time for the anniversary, the work had to be done at a quick pace. Most important was the completion of the Bhavan building. There were bottlenecks and difficulties, but with the cheerful cooperation and enterprise of everyone in the university and the grace of the Satguru, we were able to maintain the speed we had set ourselves. I wish also to take this opportunity of thanking the Rev. Father P. M. Lewis of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Patiala, who has very kindly donated a Cross, a Crucifix and some biblical literature for the meditation room in the Christianity block of the Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan. Grateful thanks are also offered to His Highness the Maharaja Sahib of Patiala, and the Rotary Club for the receptions they are giving in honour of our learned guests and to Shri K. Subramaniam, General Manager of State Bank of Patiala for his manifold help. Thanks are also due to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee for presenting a copy of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

I once again offer my grateful thanks to all our guests participating in the inauguration of this midweek of scholarly confrontation and discussion.

II

THE CHANCELLOR'S INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

DR D. C. PAVATE
Governor of Punjab

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Shri Chavan, Sardar Swaran Singh, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, Sardar Gurnam Singh, Your Highness, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen :

As Chancellor of this university, it is a great pleasure to me to extend a hearty welcome to the learned delegates, dignitaries and guests who have assembled here, this morning, in connection with the International Seminar on Guru Nanak's Life and Teachings, organized to mark the quincentenary celebrations. This gathering of scholars, amongst whom I find international celebrities, is undoubtedly a landmark in the life of this university and, I am sure, the faculty and the students will, in the years to come, recall with pride these memorable days of the seminar.

That the seminar should have been organized in the city of Patiala is, by itself, an event of great significance. This city has played a vital role in Sikh history and religion, and continues to be a centre of intellectual and spiritual life. Not only is the name of Patiala redolent of the stirring memories of power and plumage, but it also brings to our mind the Dukhniwaran Gurdwara—a temple that relieves pain and suffering and provides solace to the pilgrims who visit it. Thus, the choice of this city as the venue of the seminar, which will principally be concerned with the philosophical, theological or doctrinal concepts of the founder of Sikhism, is, I am sure, a happy coincidence.

Again, it is appropriate that the privilege of holding this historic seminar should be claimed by the Punjabi University which is adequately equipped to conduct an intelligent discussion on religions of the world. This institution, though young, has already forged ahead in several important and new directions, and has created a climate of scholarship which any older university might well be envious of. Not only has it set up postgraduate and research departments in humanities and sciences, but has also fanned out to more challenging disciplines, the foremost amongst which is the Faculty of Religious Studies. Other ancillary, but vital areas of interest which the Punjabi University is

promoting include the Punjabi theatre, folk art, linguistics, etc. Again, the Punjab Historical Studies Department and the Punjab Economy Cell have brought a scholarly awareness to bear upon topical subjects that have, for some reason or the other, remained neglected in the past. In short, the Punjabi University which is beginning to emerge as a mirror of Punjabi culture and moorings has taken a most imaginative step in organizing this seminar.

A glance at the printed programme of the seminar will show its comprehensive character. Though Guru Nanak's life and philosophy have received considerable attention in this country, I doubt if this kind of scholarly and scientific treatment on the scale envisaged here has ever been attempted by any university in India. The principal topics to be discussed here include the Founder's philosophy and mysticism, theology and doctrine, language and poetry, ethics and social ideals, besides his message and impact in the context of world religions. Such an all-inclusive survey gives one an idea of his peerless genius. A saint and a savant, a divine singer who sang the song of the Word and the song of the Cosmos, a thinker, a mystic and a family man, and a revolutionary, he was indeed the embodiment of all that was great and noble in life.

Thinking of him, one is inevitably reminded of Guru Nanak's heroic and unending battle against political iniquity and oppression on the one hand, and against religious orthodoxy, superstition and tyranny on the other. Those acquainted with the medieval history of India know what it really meant to challenge the established social order. Positions at all levels and in all respects had become so rigid, that they seemed inevitable and immutable; for what couldn't be helped had to be endured. Ritualism had almost been canonized and even the slightest departure from institutionalized conduct invited wrath, indignity and excommunication. A tragic hiatus between the individual and the society prevailed. An inner erosion had set in and caused a spiritual dislocation. Guru Nanak's crusade, when viewed in the light of these prevailing conditions, assumes a prophetic aspect. He questioned the rationale of the empires built on greed, self-aggrandizement and exploitation. With his songs and sermons, he moved the hearts of millions and his abiding message enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* gave the medieval Indian society a charter of new values.

I have had to refer to this well-known aspect of Guru Nanak's work because I find that the values he prized have once again been subjected to a severe strain during the last few decades. The threat or challenge this time stems not from the entrenched clergy but from the priests of progress, who take a squint-eyed view of secularism, science and democracy. We find such a tendency particularly noticeable among the youth of today. I am no champion of the past in every field, and indeed find some extremely distressing things in it, but I cannot help

feeling that there was, till a generation or two ago, a more positive response amongst the educated people to the finer values of life. This is not to say that there has been a decline in the quantum of intelligence or consciousness; on the contrary, the young today have extremely active and vigorous minds. And yet, the pursuit of easy pleasure has, in my opinion, warped the true values of life today. And for this, we, educationists and elders alike, are chiefly to blame. We have allowed the study of religion to fall into a sad neglect, with the result that we are now witnessing a situation which does not augur well for the future of the human race.

At one time, philosophy, classics and religion formed an indispensable part of one's education. This ensured a smooth and harmonious development of personality. A kind of certitude and inner strength marked one's doings and actions. There was at any rate a degree of spiritual sufficiency we do not have today. The breakaway from this heritage undoubtedly started in the West and has now hit our academic shores as well. However, after an agonizing experience of the two world wars and the increasing incidence of violence in the house, in the street and in the college, more thinking educationists in the West are already making agonizing enquiries into the nature of the malaise. It is being increasingly felt that wealth in the West has created its own peculiar imbalances and problems which tend to make people unhappy. Material well-being appears to have blunted the moral edge and put the human conscience to sleep. In short, what we are witnessing there is the crisis of affluence.

The problem in the Western universities is being tackled at two different levels—inter-disciplinary studies and religious studies. For, even a slight blending of what C.P. Snow has called “the two cultures”—the humanistic and the scientific—brings about a deeper and a richer understanding of life. As the saying goes, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. It is, however, increased interest in religious or spiritual studies which in the end is calculated to restore normalcy. Large sums of money are, therefore, being invested in what may be called salvage operations. This, the Western educationists are beginning to realize, is one area of investment, where ‘the law of diminishing returns’ is really reversed.

In our own country which boasts of a long and continuous religious tradition for centuries, I fear, it is not being sufficiently realized that the absence of religion from our studies can eventually lead to the absence of religion from life and society. I feel a proper understanding of world religions is the surest way of curing the lacerated ‘psyche’ of man. Religion ought to be an aid to a richer and fuller life, leading to the absence of hatred and violence towards others. A scholarly study of the scriptures alone can break the stranglehold of orthodoxy, superstition and dogma. In reality, it is chiefly the institutionalized religion which

has driven sensitive and intelligent people into agnosticism, especially when it acquires a narrow, sectarian character. True religion is the music of the soul and the balm of wounded sensibilities. It must inevitably result in increased social and moral awareness.

To quote Swami Vivekananda, "So long as even a dog in my country is without food, my whole religion will be to feed it." Mahatma Gandhi whose birth centenary happily coincides with the birth quinqucentenary celebrations of Guru Nanak, not only spiritualized politics but declared that his aim was to "wipe every tear from every eye." This, in my view, is the heart of any true religion.

The allergy of the modern youth to the direct teaching of Divinity and Theology is understandable. Sermons from the pulpit hardly leave any deep or lasting effect on the minds of the youngsters. In fact, there is a built-in resistance in all sensitive minds to exercises in preaching. Honest doubt is far better than unthinking allegiance to a creed or doctrine. What the youth in the universities needs today is a climate of spiritual values. One of the ways to do this is to institute departments of religious studies which may carry out research in various religions and philosophies in an atmosphere of academic freedom and intellectual integrity. I am glad, therefore, to note that the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies established by the Punjabi University less than two years back has already begun to make its presence felt in a striking manner. Its scholars, I understand, are applying themselves vigorously to the task in hand, and a number of publications, some of which will be officially released today and tomorrow, bear ample testimony to this fact.

Befittingly then, the Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan, the dedication ceremony of which was performed by the Chief Minister of Punjab, Sardar Gurnam Singh, last evening, is going to house the Department of Religious Studies in this university. This building of lyric charm and grace could not have secured a more gracious tenant. I pray this lease be long and happy and fruitful!

Let me in the end thank all the distinguished delegates and guests who have graced the occasion. I am specially beholden to Shri Y. B. Chavan, Sardar Swaran Singh, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, Sardar Gurnam Singh, His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala, Dr D. S. Kothari, Professor Cantwell Smith and Dr Amiya Chakravarty, who despite pressure of work and various engagements have found time to be here with us in Patiala.

III

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DR YESHWANTRAO BALWANTRAO CHAVAN
Home Minister of India

Mr Chancellor, Mr Vice-Chancellor, Mr Chief Minister, ladies and gentlemen :

Let me at the outset express my thanks to you, Mr Chancellor, for having done me the unique honour in asking me to inaugurate this international seminar on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak. This is not just one of the multitudinous engagements which a man in public life has to get accustomed to. This event carries a special significance as it represents a unique congress of minds on a subject that has interest for all those concerned with the 'eternal' in a changing world. Therefore when I stand before this congregation of eminent scholars, it is with a deep sense of commitment to the fundamental values of humanism enunciated by Guru Nanak.

I am glad to see that scholars and professors drawn from a number of countries, faiths and denominations are participating in the seminar. This is as it should be, for Guru Nanak's mind and vision knew no barriers. In his own day when the freedom of thought and expression was severely limited, he invited debate and discussion wherever he went. The deliberations envisaged here are truly in keeping with the free and unfettered spirit of the Guru. The seminar is a measure of the catholicity of the creed founded by him. India has played host to several faiths and creeds from time immemorial, and this get-together is an extension of the same spirit.

It is a significant coincidence that the birth quincentenary celebrations of Guru Nanak should synchronize with the centenary of Gandhiji's birth. One cannot but take note of this fact because, although separated by four hundred years, these two great seers helped preserve and promote the humanistic values in this country. In a manner of speaking, they symbolize the perennial urges and achievements of the soul of India.

In the history of every country a time comes when its spiritual, intellectual and socio-economic order gets a set-back and becomes stagnant. Guru Nanak's advent marks a watershed in Indian history.

He came on the national scene at a time when superstition, meaningless rituals and intense formalism had led to erosion of human values. The thinking of the people had been warped by a crippling fatalism. There was an atmosphere of lethargy and inaction. In such an hour of darkness and social decay rose Guru Nanak to preach equality between man and man, the importance of Karma as against renunciation, the importance of humility and of service to the people. He succeeded in rousing the people and in breathing a new life into them. He broke the hold that fatalism had acquired on their minds.

One of the greatest attributes of the Founder of Sikhism was the openness of his mind which appreciated the new impulses generated by the intermingling of two of the most powerful religions of the world, viz., Hinduism and Islam. The fundamental precepts of Sikhism therefore represent a synthesis of these two religions. While the concepts of Advaita and Karmayoga of the Hindu philosophy appealed to Guru Nanak strongly, he was immensely impressed by the humanistic and egalitarian injunctions of Islam and other religions in regard to labour, property, corporate responsibility, etc. His was basically a revolt of the thinking mind against the perpetuation of the social ignorance and the exploitation of the poor by the political powers and the institutionalized religion. The foundation of the Sikh religion and the history of its growth is the story of the fight between the forces of rationalism and modernism on the one hand and the forces of ignorance and obscurantism on the other. In a way this struggle is eternal. Even today that fight continues, may be in a different form and in a different context. Although we may not talk in terms of religion so much as we do in terms of reason and science, we are still fighting to evolve a new society where men will be equal, where exploitation will end, where amity and understanding will replace hatred, bigotry and artificial barriers between the communities. That, basically speaking, is the relevance of Guru Nanak's teachings today. Take, for example, the basic tenets of our Constitution — the ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Guru Nanak preached these values five hundred years ago. Not only that: he ordained his followers, by evolving the system of *Guru-ka-Langar*, to partake of food from the same kitchen — the ultimate test of social equality. One cannot but salute his memory when one realizes that he paved the way for the ideals which we are striving to achieve even today in independent India.

This brings me to the question of the place of religion in our lives. It is often said that ours is an irreligious Constitution and that we are promoting atheism in the country. Nothing could be farther from truth. Let me point out that the most important of the fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution are the rights of equality and freedom of conscience and religion. Secularism viewed in this context can neither be called irreligion nor atheism. While everyone is free to

follow his own religious convictions and faith, the policies of the State are not to be guided by ecclesiastical pronouncements. Secularism is founded on the recognition of the fact that religion is necessarily a question of individual faith. With such a rational approach the State has to respect all religions equally, and, what is important, has to devote itself to promoting respect, understanding and tolerance among the people of different faiths. So far as the fundamental humanistic precepts of all religions - equality, freedom from exploitation, amity and tolerance - are concerned, we are duty-bound to take positive action to promote them, not as a part of this or that religion, but as the basic tenets which should govern the treatment of man by man.

Ours is a history of understanding and respect for various religious faiths and ideologies which have prospered in this country. We should well be proud of this heritage. Over the centuries we have acknowledged the underlying unity in the teachings of all religions, and have realized that basically it is the quest for the truth. Religion enjoys a special place in the life of our people. It is of relevance today also because abstract rationalism is extremely difficult to conceive, appreciate and imbibe. We are fortunate to have a deeply religious heritage. I, for one, would like it to be preserved and enriched further.

This takes me to the crisis of values that we are witnessing today. In a manner of speaking, no age or period in history has really been free from bedevilment. In fact, each generation considers itself singularly unhappy or unlucky. And yet some periods, relatively speaking, are more vulnerable to erosion of values than others. This phenomenon is not necessarily limited to one or two countries. Today, it is a world-wide trend. I can understand and appreciate the revolt of the younger generation against the older generation, because it is only through such processes that mankind makes progress. But the new industrial society and forces of modernism and science should not be permitted to imperil the basic values which ought to govern the society. Discarding of these precious values without replacement by any others, equally acceptable to all people is bound to result in a crisis. And no society can aspire to build up the superstructure of progress and modernism without a stable social order. In rapidly changing societies, the relationship between man and man is bound to be as important, if not more important than that between man and machine. At this stage of our history we are undergoing the very fundamental changes towards modernism and industrialization. We have had the benefit of advice and guidance of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. In a sense, both these leaders underlined the two most important factors which I mentioned earlier. Today's seminar is, therefore, a valuable one. The synthesis of values which Guru Nanak symbolized is as relevant today as it was 500 years ago.

I am very glad to know that the Punjabi University has instituted a

Department of World Religions. It is an imaginative step, and I would like to congratulate the University authorities on it. A proper and scientific study of religion, I am sure, will succeed in separating the fundamentals from the superstructures of the creeds. I have no doubt that this effort would contribute towards promoting understanding and respect among the followers of different religions.

Before I conclude, may I say once again how happy I am to be associated with this seminar. I wish your deliberations all success.

IV

GURU NANAK AS HISTORICAL MEMORY AND CONTINUING REALITY *

HARBANS SINGH

For recovering an historical memory of Guru Nanak our sources, it may be stated at the very beginning, are almost entirely traditional. On first sight, evidence about him seems abundant and easy to reach. The factual traits of his person are well established. In point of time he is closer to us than any other of the great religious teachers of the world. His era is no more remote than five centuries ago. He thus lived and preached in the full view of history. The ministry which began with him was carried on by his nine spiritual successors. This brought his name and prophecy in continuum to the beginning of the eighteenth century, i.e., till 1708, when the tenth and last Guru, or prophet-teacher, Gobind Singh, died ending the line of personal witnesses and bestowing the inheritance on the holy book, the *Guru Granth*. His followers cherish the immediacy of his presence with a rare faith and fidelity. In the psyche and consciousness of the people of North India as a whole, the image lovingly abides of that "gentle and most peaceable" of prophets. Song and story celebrate him. Legend abounds. His poetry has come down to us as spoken by him, with its characteristic symbolism and imagery, coined in the depths of his soul and its metres and harmonies modulated upon his lips. More than 900 of his *sabds*, or hymns, are in the Scripture.

It is possible to go to Talwandi, now Nankana Sahib, where he was born and find families who trace their ancestry back to his time. In that town one can see the places where he had his school-lessons or where he took shelter to avoid meeting an angry father after what was considered to be one of his wasteful adventures. Villages and towns all over India preserve traditions recounting his visits during his extensive travels. His direct lineal descendants are with us. Written materials, if not copious, are in fair supply. Life-stories began to be compiled about five decades

* Based on a public lecture delivered at Harvard University, Cambridge, on April 30, 1969, in observance of the Guru Nanak quinquacentennial.

after the Guru's passing away and have since multiplied. Yet from the historical point of view this testimony will remain inadequate.

His religious verse bears witness to the nature of God and man's duty, not to himself. One would look in vain in it for references to any contemporary events or personal experiences in which his convictions were formed. This would be contrary to the very nature of his commission. "As the Lord sends His word so do I deliver it," he had said. He was a Guru, a teacher through whom light and truth were transmitted to man. His poetry was made for this purpose. Concern with the Divine, the Ultimate Reality and the realization of human destiny in relation to it is the theme of the entire body of Sikh Scriptural texts which contains not only Guru Nanak's compositions, but also the works of five of the other Gurus and of some Hindu and Muslim saints. Guru Arjun, the Fifth Guru, who compiled the canon in 1604, applied rigorous standards and took only such of the hymns of the saints as were in accord with those of the Gurus in their spiritual tone and meaning. He forbore to include the compositions of Bhai Gurdas, one of his most learned and much revered contemporaries, who transcribed the first copy of the book from his dictation. The religious motive of his verse was immaculate and for this reason the Guru designated it as the key to the Scripture. But, because some of it contained eulogistic allusions to the Gurus and to certain details of their ministries, it was denied Scriptural status.

The first accounts written of Guru Nanak are known as the *Janamsakhis*, or birth-stories. The *genre* which gained vogue towards the end of the sixteenth century, or the beginning of the seventeenth, has some peculiar characteristics. The Janamsakhis are written in Punjabi and represent the earliest extant models of prose in the language. The script is Gurmukhi, an alphabet which was refined and used by Guru Nanak for his own hymns. The form is episodic and the accounts are made up of a series of short disjointed narratives. The texts are generally anonymous: out of the four distinctly categorized Janamsakhi cycles the authorship of only one is known beyond doubt. All of them relate to Guru Nanak and none to the later Gurus who, as successors to his spiritual commission, were entitled to, and in fact received, equal reverence. The Janamsakhi accounts tell their story in the language of myth and legend. There is no attempt at chronology. Even place-names are left vague or, in many cases, not mentioned at all. The incidents are sometimes incipient and seem to have been devised to illustrate and exemplify some of Guru Nanak's sayings. The pious embellishment takes stronger hold as time passes and the legendary and the miraculous preponderate in the later versions. The style tends to become more elaborate and the narratives wilt under the weight of loose detail. The Janamsakhis have also suffered by interpolations, the copyists' allowable margin of error as well as their arbitrary innovation, and deliberate distortion by schismatic and heretical sects. Many diverse versions are

in circulation, more of them in old manuscripts than in printed copy.

There is no older source on the life of Guru Nanak traced so far than the oldest available Janamsakhi. It is doubtful if any exist. From the investigations of historians and researchers and from the writer's own humble pursuit of the subject, it may not be entirely illegitimate to say that the chances of a major discovery are remote. In the first place, those times were disturbed and did not favour any sustained literary enterprise. It was especially true of the Punjab which had been in constant turmoil owing to invasion and warfare. Secondly, historiography had never acquired any considerable indigenous currency. This art was, however, not unknown to the Muslim ruling race and had in their hands manifested itself in some distinguished and enduring models. But these were, commonly, the annals of kings and their courts and, less frequently, the accounts of travellers or life-stories of Sufi ascetics. Contemporary with Guru Nanak was Babar's *Tuzuk*, or memoirs, a work of high literary genius. The Sikh tradition strongly subscribes to a meeting between the Guru and the Mughal Emperor. Babar gives in his book many interesting details of the campaigns and events he was involved in. He also describes the Indian life and customs and writes minutely even of such matters as the people's style of eating their mangoes and drawing water from their wells. There is, however, no mention in these recollections that he met Guru Nanak. This will not be sufficient reason for rejecting altogether the possibility of such a meeting having taken place, though it does underline the fact that a persistent tradition about the Guru fails to elicit support from a likely contemporary source.

The Sikh learning itself was depressed by a series of crises. In 1704, when Guru Gobind Singh had to evacuate Anandpur under pressure of a protracted siege by the Mughal troops, a large quantity of manuscript material was washed away with the baggage in the river Sirsa which he had to cross. This was mostly the creation of the fifty-two poets the Tenth Master kept with him to make translations in the current tongue from ancient classics. Yet it was not unlikely that with this literature were swallowed by the Sirsa some prior documents accumulated over the years. Also the whole of the eighteenth century, which was a period of persecution and stress for the community, marked one vast gap in Sikh letters. The destruction and loss of manuscripts and documents during this time would be beyond estimate. What came through unscathed was the *Guru Granth*—the Guru's own word. This was held dearer than anything else and the Sikhs carried copies of it to their desert haunts and preserved them through peril and tribulation at the cost of their lives.

The reason for this will perhaps, eventually, remain elusive, but the Janamsakhis are by all odds the only means of information about the life of Guru Nanak. The canonical sources may be used to authenticate

the perspective in terms of the Guru's own sayings and teachings ; they will yield no empirical facts. The writings subsequent to the Janamsakhis may be illustrative of how his followers understood the Guru and his mission at a given time ; they do not transcend the historical framework set by the latter. The local tradition obtaining at places sacred to his memory bears testimony to the forms of religious life that had their origins in Guru Nanak's work ; it provides no definitive data. In result, the image of Guru Nanak that has come down the centuries is the one mediated by the Janamsakhis.

II

How do the Janamsakhis preserve the memory of Guru Nanak? In illustration may be described a few events from his life as narrated by them. Not all of these are contained in the four major Janamsakhis and, where an incident is common to two or more, the accounts differ mutually on details. Here are narrated the more representative ones as assimilated by common tradition.

Guru Nanak was born in a small village called Talwandi, now Nankana Sahib, forty-five miles south-west of Lahore, on April 15, 1469. Another date simultaneously current coincides with the full-moon of the month of Katik, October-November, and the birthday of Guru Nanak is in fact celebrated everywhere on this day. This date derives from the later Janamsakhis, including that of Bhai Bala. The earlier ones such as *Puratan Janamsakhi* and *Meharban Janamsakhi* give the April date. So do the *Janamsakhi* by Bhai Mani Singh and *Mahima Prakash*. Even books such as Santokh Singh's *Nanak Prakash* supporting Katik Purnima give the age of the Guru at his death as 70 years, 5 months and 7 days, which worked backwards brings the date of his birth to mid-April. The point was cogently laboured by Karam Singh in his book *Katik ke Baisakh* ("November or April?") published in 1912. Almost every book on Guru Nanak since accepts the Baisakh or April date, but the tradition of observing the birthday in Katik, or October-November, howsoever it originated, continues.

His father Kalyan Chand, shortened by the biographers to Kalu, of the Bedi clan of the Kshatriyas, was the village accountant and kept rent records of the estate of the local Muslim landlord. According to the *Janamsakhi* account, prodigies attended the illustrious advent. Light flashed across the mud-built room in which the birth took place. The gifted and the wise in the celestial regions and below rejoiced in the happy event. The family priest who came to cast the child's horoscope told Father Kalu that his son would sit under canopy. "Both Hindus and Turks will pay him reverence ; his name will become current on earth and in heaven. The ocean will give him the way ; so will the earth and the skies. He will worship and acknowledge but One Formless

Lord and teach others to do so... Every creature he will consider as God's creation."¹

In the village, the child Nanak was the favourite of both Hindus and Muslims. To quote from the *Janamsakhi*, "A Hindu chancing to pass by would involuntarily exclaim, 'Great is Gobind, the Lord! Such a small child and yet he speaks so auspiciously. His words are as immaculate as he is handsome. He is the image of God Himself.' And if a Turk saw him, he would remark with equal enthusiasm, 'Wonderful is Thy creation, Merciful Master! How good-looking is the child and how polite his speech! Talking to him brings one such satisfaction. He is a noble one blessed by the Almighty Allah.'"²

When Nanak was seven, he had to prepare to go to school. The Pandit was consulted about the day most favourable for him to begin. At school, he surprised his teacher by writing on his wooden slate what turned out to be a poem in Punjabi, a kind of acrostic which he had extemporized with verses matching each of the thirty-five letters of the alphabet. In it he had reflected upon questions far beyond his years. The main one he seemed to have in mind was: "Who is truly learned?" Certainly not one who knew the letters of the alphabet, but "he who arrives at true understanding through these." This is known to be the first of Guru Nanak's extensive compositions which have been transmitted in the original and are preserved in the *Guru Granth*.

As Nanak entered his eleventh year, he had attained the age when he must, according to prescribed usage, be given the *janeu*, or the sacrificial thread, as a badge of the upper caste to which he belonged. At the ceremony for which his father had invited many relatives and friends, he refused to take the *janeu* and extemporized the following *sabd* :

Let compassion be thy cotton ;
Spin it into the yarn of contentment ;
Give it knots of continence
and the twist of truth,
Thus wilt thou make a *janeu* for the soul.
If such a one thou hast,
put it on me.
The thread so made will neither snap,
nor become soiled.
It will neither be burned nor lost.
Blest is the man, O Nanak,
who weareth such a thread around his neck.³

As a boy, he took out to pasture the family herd. Of this period the *Janamsakhis* relate several miraculous stories. While out with his herd one day, Nanak, it is said, lay down to rest under a tree in the summer afternoon and fell asleep. Rai Bular, the Muslim owner of the village, which slept the weary herdsman, he suddenly reined in his horse and was riding by with his servants. As he reached near the tree under

stopped. He thought he had seen a strange phenomenon. The shadows of the other trees had travelled round with the sun, but not of the tree in front of which his horse stood. Rai Bular asked the servants to find out who slept under that tree. They said it was Kalu Bedi's son Nanak, and raised the sleeper. Nanak joining his hands saluted Rai Bular. The latter alighted from his horse, embraced Nanak and kissed him on his forehead. He said to his companions, "Nanak is not empty. On him rests God's favour. Today we have seen another wonderful thing. Watch the Lord's marvel! The shade of this tree remains stationary for the blessed one. He is no ordinary mortal. Praise be to the Almighty Master." Rai Bular did not mount his horse again but walked home instead. He called Father Kalu and said to him, "Your son is a great man. He is the honour of my town. Kalu, thou hast become exalted and I am also exalted, in whose town such a one has been born."⁴ Father Kalu said, "Of the things of God, God alone knows."

An ancient gnarled *van*-tree which is said to be the one that protected the Guru with its immobile shadow is still preserved in the precincts of a Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib.

Nanak was now about 16 years of age. He stayed most of the time out of doors tending his herd of cattle, consorting with wayfaring sadhus and devoting his solitude to inward communion. Then suddenly a change came upon him. He grew silent and became immersed in his own thoughts more than ever before. He did not wish to stir out of his home; he ate and drank but little and lay in bed all the time. It was like this for four or five days. The parents were grieved and the neighbours rumoured that something had happened to Nanak. Mother Tripta, who had in a loving way always seen a purpose in whatever her son did and never raised a doubt or question, wondered what could have been the matter. She was pained to hear the remarks of the neighbours and, one day when she saw a group of anchorites pass along the street, she felt a sudden twinge in her heart. She hurriedly went to where Nanak was and spoke to him, "Son, I have seen some mendicants, perhaps on their way to far-off places of pilgrimage. I thought my own Nanak might not take the same route one day. Like them he might not go away to visit the hallowed spots. Son, my heart is restless. I say they left their mothers behind and likewise Nanak will go, too, leaving his mother to her loneliness."⁵

Nanak here uttered a hymn in which he said that he did not need to make any such journeys. He had turned his own heart into a temple and that was the object of his pilgrimage.

The physician who was called in held Nanak's wrist within his fingers and began to feel the pulse under them to diagnose the malady. Nanak told him that the sickness was not of the body and broke into the following *sabd*:

They have called the physician to try his physic;
 And he grips the arm and searches it for ailment.
 Little doth the good physician know
 That the ache is in the heart.⁶

The physician, a wise old man, understood what Nanak meant and assured Kalu that his son needed no healing. "He is himself free from infirmity and might well a healer be for others," he said.⁷

The mood resolved itself in Nanak's reverting to his usual manner. With a view to further diverting his mind and providing him with a permanent vocation, Kalu one day counted out to him twenty silver rupees and asked him to invest the sum profitably. On his way to the neighbouring market-town to purchase the merchandise, Nanak fell in with a group of hungry sadhus. He thought that he had come upon as good a bargain as he could make anywhere and spent the money his father had given him on buying food for them.

At Sultanpur, where Nanak had gone to stay with his sister Nanaki and carried on his spiritual vocation along with work in the Muslim Nawab's *modikhana*, he did not return home one day after his morning ablutions in the river. He remained absent for three days. This was an interval of a crucial mystical experience. The Janamsakhis have described it in terms of a direct communion with God. One of these says, "As the Lord willed, Nanak the devotee, was escorted to His Presence. Then a cup filled with *amrit* (nectar) was given him with the command, 'Nanak, this is the cup of Name-adoration. Drink it... I am with thee and I do bless and exalt thee. Whoever remembers thee will have My favour. Go, rejoice in My Name and teach others to do so... I have bestowed upon thee the gift of My Name. Let this be thy calling.' Nanak made the salutation and stood up." The Voice spoke again, "Nanak, thou discerneth My Will." Nanak recited what became the preamble to the first Sikh prayer, the *Japji* :

There is but one God. He is all that is.
 He is the Creator of all things and He is all-pervasive.
 He is without fear and without enmity.
 He is timeless, unborn and self-existent.
 He is the Enlightener
 And can be realized by grace of Himself alone.
 He was in the beginning; He was in all ages.
 The True One is, was, O Nanak, and shall forever be.

The Voice was heard again, "Who is just in thine eyes, Nanak, shall be so in Mine. He who receiveth thy grace shall abide in Mine. My name is the Supreme Lord: thy name is divine Guru."

"From Heavenly court a robe of honour was conferred upon Guru Nanak."

Then, says the *Janamsakhi*, the order was given to the ministers that they should take Guru Nanak back to the ferry. As he made his

appearance on the third day, the citizens questioned each other in amazement: "He had fallen into the river. Whencesoever hath he come now?" The first words Guru Nanak uttered upon reappearance were: "There is no Hindu and there is no Musalman."⁸

Before the Nawab to whom complaints were made by the orthodox, the Guru recited the following *sabd*:

It is not easy to be called a Musalman:
 If there were one let him be so known.
 He should first take to his heart the tenets of his
 faith and purge himself of all pride.
 He will be a Muslim who pursues the path
 shown by the founder of the creed
 And who extinguishes anxiety about life and death;
 Who accepts the will of God as supreme,
 Who has faith in the Creator and surrenders
 himself to Him
 When he has established his goodwill for all,
 O Nanak, will he be called a Musalman.⁹

The *Janamsakhi* records, "When the Guru had uttered this *sabd*, the Sayyids, sons of Shaikhs, the Mufti, the Nawab, the chiefs and the leaders were all amazed. The Nawab said, 'Qazi, Nanak hath arrived at the truth. Any further questioning will be futile.' ... All the people, Hindus and Musalmans, began to say to the Nawab that God spoke on Nanak's lips."¹⁰

Guru Nanak was now ready to go forth into the wider world with the message he felt himself called upon to discharge. He uttered a hymn of gratefulness: "An humble bard was I without occupation. Praise be to the Lord that he called me to work."¹¹ Dressed in a composite garb which belonged to none of the prevalent orders and which indeed was symbolic of his common message for all and accompanied by the Muslim associate Mardana, Guru Nanak set out on his travels which took him to all four corners of India and beyond. The travels occupied him for 24 years. In the course of these tours he visited places of pilgrimage sacred to Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. He shared the hospitality of humble homes and rested sometimes under bare skies. He went to small unknown villages and he visited the seats of the mighty. He mixed with simple, unlettered men, and he discoursed with the learned. He attended fairs and festivals, temples and mosques, hermitages and *khanaqahs*. He spoke with individuals engaged in their daily trades and he preached to multitudes, conveniently reaching ancient centres of pilgrimage. Many found peace in his gentle words of love and faith and were won over to his simple teaching.

The *Janamsakhis* present these journeys in a series of stories, parables and miracles. Early in his travels, for instance, he arrived at Eminabad, an ancient town in West Punjab. Here he stayed with Lalo, a carpenter,

declining the invitation of a wealthy, caste-proud nobleman, Malik Bhago. As the latter chided him for eating with a lowly carpenter, the Guru sent for food from his kitchen as well as from Lalo's home. In the words of the *Janamsakhi*, "Guru Nanak took Lalo's coarse bread in his right hand and Malik Bhago's delicacies in the left. As he pressed both, milk dropped from Lalo's coarse bread, and blood from Malik Bhago's delicacies. The entire assembly was lost in amazement."¹²

On the highway, outside Tulamba, in south-west Punjab, lived one Shaikh Sajjan in apparent piety and prosperity. He maintained a mosque as well as a temple for use by Muslim and Hindu travellers and seemed to welcome anyone for a night's lodging and meal. Many a wayfarer felt relieved and grateful when, at the end of a day's journey, he was led into such a hospitable home. The sleeping guests were Sajjan's victims and their goods his property. After despatching the traveller with the help of his band of thugs, he would appear in the morning with his pilgrim's staff and rosary and spread out a carpet to pray.

In Guru Nanak's lustrous face the far-seeing Sajjan read the signs of affluence. The guest was therefore all the more welcome and entitled to more than usual courtesy. But at night the Guru tarried long before going to bed. Sajjan who had been waiting got impatient. At last, he came near the door to see inside the room. Mardana was playing on the rebeck and the Guru was singing a hymn in enraptured devotion. The sight held Sajjan. The sweet music thrilled him. It calmed the agitation in his heart and he felt a new consciousness welling up in him. He fell at the Guru's feet and said remorsefully how sinful he was. The Guru assured him that he could yet hope for God's grace and forgiveness if he confessed and repented. Sajjan owned his sins and prayed the Guru for pardon. One condition was laid upon him ; he must give away all of his possessions which he had collected by impious means. This Sajjan promised to do. He converted his house into a *dharamsala*, or place of worship and charity, and became a zealous disseminator of Guru Nanak's teaching.

At Hardwar, the ancient place of Hindu pilgrimage on the sacred Ganga, Guru Nanak stood with the pilgrims on the spot where the waters of the river were considered to be the holiest. As they dipped themselves in the river to perform their ablutions, the pilgrims prayed and tossed water in palmsful towards the rising sun in the east. The Guru took to throwing water to the west. The people were surprised to see this and wondered how anybody could act in such a sacrilegious manner. Some thought he was crazed in the mind ; others that he must be a Turk. Soon a crowd gathered round him and began to question him, "Are you a Hindu or a Musalman? Why do you throw water to the west? Whom will it avail?"

"Whom will your water benefit?" he asked in return.

They told him that they were offering oblations to the spirits of their ancestors. This was for their satisfaction. Upon this reply the Guru continued his procedure with even greater earnestness. The pilgrims became puzzled. "What do you mean by offering water to the west?" they asked him again. "This is for my farm near Lahore which needs watering," said the Guru. The listeners felt amused and asked him how anyone could send water so many miles away.

"How far must our ancestors be from here?" asked the Guru. "My water has but to cross Sirhind and then Lahore is barely a stone's throw from there."¹³

The people realized that this was no common man and were willing to listen to him.

In Pakpattan, Guru Nanak met Shaikh Ibrahim, twelfth in descent from Shaikh Farid, the famous Sufi mystic. The Janamsakhis describe in a mixture of poetic metaphor and philosophy the discourse which took place between them.

On seeing Guru Nanak in the ordinary attire of a house-holder, Shaikh Ibrahim remarked:

Covet either the world, or covet Allah, the Creator!
Set not thy feet on two boats
Lest thou drownest all thy goods.

The Guru answered:

Set thy feet on both boats;
In both ship thy goods.
A boat will sink, a boat will go across;
For those who deal in true, everlasting goods,
There is no ocean, no drowning, no loss.

He told the Shaikh that to gain the Divine one need not disown the world. In discovering harmony between the two lay the way to attainment. The body would perish, but the other boat, the soul, could be saved by living in the world in the spirit of a true seeker.

On return from his second *udasi*, a word commonly used for his preaching odysseys, Guru Nanak visited Multan. In this ancient town which had witnessed through the centuries history's most violent vicissitudes, there lived at that time many Sufi faqirs. It also contained shrines and mausoleums of several eminent saints such as Shaikh Muhammad Yusuf Gardezi (*d.* 1114), Shaikh Baha-ud-Din Zikaria (*d.* 1266), their descendants and successors. When they learned about the Guru's arrival the *pirs* of Multan, says Bhai Gurdas, came out and met him with a bowl overflowing to the edge with milk. This gesture of theirs symbolized that the place was already full of religious teachers. The Guru laid upon the milk-bowl a jasmine petal indicating that he would still find room for himself without unsettling the others. And the Guru, says Bhai Gurdas, mingled there as do the waters of the Ganga and the sea.¹⁴

At the end of his extensive travels Guru Nanak returned to the Punjab to settle down at Kartarpur, a town he had himself founded on the banks of the river Ravi. Here he spent the last eighteen years of his life. From the *Janamsakhi* accounts, this period witnessed the emergence of a growing fellowship of disciples around the person of the Guru. Whoever came ate in the *langar* sitting in a row with the others signifying surrender of caste scruples, engaged himself in *sewa*, or physical labour in the service of the community, listened to the Guru's teaching and joined in reciting the holy hymns. The Guru himself resumed the duties of everyday life, and, alongside of his responsibility as spiritual guide, worked on the farm and provided for his family. The most significant event of these years was the arrival in Kartarpur of one Lehna who came as a seeker and was in the end chosen by the Guru as his successor. When installing him in the position of Guru, Guru Nanak called him *Angad*, part and parcel of his own being and, as says the *Janamsakhi*, placing five copper coins before him, made obeisance at his feet.¹⁵

Thus does the oldest known *Janamsakhi* describe the last moments of the Guru's life. "The Musalmans began to say, 'We shall bury him.' The Hindus, 'We shall cremate him.' The Guru said, 'Put ye flowers on both sides—those of the Hindus on the right and those of the Musalmans on the left. They whose flowers remain fresh will have the choice.' Then he asked the assembly to recite God's praises and pulled the sheet over himself. When they lifted up the sheet, they found nothing except the flowers. The flowers of both the Musalmans and the Hindus were fresh."¹⁶

Such is the memory of Guru Nanak the *Janamsakhis* have bequeathed to history—a Guru, or universal teacher, gentle, humble and full of love and human kindness, melting into contemporary consciousness, through his poetic utterance and straightforward example, the message divinely laid upon him, making no distinction between the Hindu and the Muslim, the high-caste and the low-caste, protesting, sometimes in mildly ironic terms and sometimes more forthrightly, against formalistic religious observances and prevalent injustices, and finally appointing a successor to carry on his teaching. This is the memory of him that survives to this day among his followers and admirers.

III

Especially notable here are both the fact of the nomination of a successor and the nature of the succession. The successor, as has been noted, was from among the disciples: in this choice the Guru's own sons were bypassed. The disciple chosen was made by the Guru equal with himself. He transmitted to him his responsibilities and, as sang the poets, his light as well. He saw the disciple in his own image and

paid him the reverence due to the Guru when he proclaimed his succession. The procedure was repeated successively over eight generations. The Sikh faith thus had ten spiritual guides succeeding one after another, who are regarded with equal adoration and honour by the followers as manifesting the same spirit and message. The succeeding Gurus were themselves conscious of the inheritance that had come to them from the First Guru. They were witnesses to the continuing presence of Guru Nanak: so was the community which was developing in their care.

Of this subtle relationship and the pervasive influence of Guru Nanak there is interesting contemporary testimony. Interesting, because it authenticates the living Sikh belief that all the ten Gurus partook of the same spirit and worked for the implementation of truths brought to light by the First, Guru Nanak. This belief, as is manifested by this evidence, is not a matter of reading history backwards. Satta and Balwand, the minstrels who recited the holy hymns for the Second Guru, Angad, thus sang in an ode which is preserved in the *Guru Granth*: "Guru Nanak invested Lehna with the mark of Guruship... He [Guru Angad] had the same light, the same method; it is the Master who had changed his body." About the Third and Fourth Gurus, Amar Das and Ram Das, they said, "The wise being, Guru Nanak, descended in the form of Amar Das... The sect was astonished to see Nanak's canopy over Amar Das's head. Guru Amar Das obtained the same throne, and the same court... Hail, hail, Guru Ram Das! God who created thee hath decorated thee... Thou art Nanak! Thou art Lehna; thou art Amar Das."¹⁷

Bhai Gurdas, who is much revered in Sikh learning and piety and whose compositions were designated by the Fifth Guru as the key to the Scripture, said, in one of his odes, "In his lifetime Nanak installed Lehna and conferred on him the regalia of Guruship. Guru Nanak turned himself into Angad by blending his light with him... Angad had the same mark, the same umbrella over his head and was seated on the same true throne as Guru Nanak. The seal from Guru Nanak's hand passed on to Guru Angad's and thus was his sovereignty proclaimed... Lehna obtained the gift from Nanak and to the house of Amar Das it must descend." And, then, on to Ram Das, Arjun and Hargobind. "Arjun," says Bhai Gurdas, "transformed himself into Hargobind and chiselled his own image upon him."¹⁸

This awareness of the personality of Guru Nanak acting amidst them through the successor-Gurus was so permeant among the Sikhs that Mobid Zulfiqar Ardastani writing a century after him in his Persian work *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* said, "The Sikhs say that when Nanak left his body, he absorbed himself in Guru Angad who was his most devoted disciple, and that Guru Angad is Nanak himself. After that, at the time of his death, Guru Angad entered into the body of Amar Das.

He in the same manner occupied a place in the body of Ram Das, and Ram Das in the same way got united with Arjun... They say that whoever does not acknowledge Guru Arjun to be the very self of Baba Nanak becomes a non-believer."¹⁹

Guru Gobind Singh, last of the Gurus, himself wrote in his poetical autobiography called *Bachitra Natak*: "Nanak assumed the body of Angad... Afterwards Nanak was called Amar Das, as one lamp is lit from another... The holy Nanak was revered as Angad. Angad was recognized as Amar Das. And Amar Das became Ram Das... When Ram Das was blended with the Divine, he gave the Guruship to Arjun. Arjun appointed Hargobind in his place and Hargobind gave his seat to Har Rai. Har Krishan, his son, then became Guru. After him came Tegh Bahadur."²⁰

This oneness, this unity of the Gurus came home to the Sikhs through their belief in the presence of Guru Nanak in them. For the Gurus themselves this presence was a constant reality, an inspiration and the norm in the exercise of their spiritual office. They wrote religious verse in the name of the First Guru. All their hymns in the *Guru Granth* bear the *nom-de-plume* of Nanak. Thus we have the compositions of Nanak I, Nanak II, Nanak III, and so on. These verses have a remarkable correspondence of tone and concept: in both utterance and deed later Gurus, Nanaks themselves as the Sikhs believe, were acting out the intuition mediated to them from Guru Nanak.

The memory of Guru Nanak was in this manner operative in the subsequent Sikh development. The interplay of the original impulse and the exigencies of contemporary social environment set the course of this evolution. Challenges arose: new situations demanded and elicited new answers. Points of transfiguration were reached and worked out. Yet it is possible to discern in this process a basic harmony and continuity attributable primarily to the ever-present Nanak legend.

Each of the successor-Gurus contributed towards the evolution of the creed and civil organization in accordance with the spirit of the teaching inherited from Guru Nanak and the existing historical factors. The Fifth Guru, Arjun, for instance, gave the Sikhs their holy book, the *Granth Sahib*, and their Mecca, the Harmandir, now the Golden Temple of Amritsar. In the holy book which he compiled he included the hymns of his predecessors and his own and of some of the saints of medieval India, both Hindu and Muslim. Among the latter were Ramanand, Kabir, Namdev and the Sufi mystic Shaikh Farid. The foundation of the Sikh shrine at Amritsar was laid at the request of the Fifth Guru by the well-known Muslim divine Mian Mir. To the growing intolerance of the ruling authority Guru Arjun responded by resignedly accepting martyrdom with extreme torture; his successor by sanctioning the use of arms. Seeing how peaceable means had failed to secure the rising sect immunity from oppression the latter recognized

this as a lawful alternative. He chose himself a warrior's equipment for the ceremonies of succession and put on two swords, declaring one to be the symbol of his spiritual and the other that of his temporal investiture. The Ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was the second of the Gurus to be executed under imperial orders.

History from henceforward takes a more decisive turn. The events are well known. What might bear mentioning here is the point that, in this period of stress, hold was maintained on the insights which had till then been the guiding principles. The struggle in which Guru Gobind Singh became involved was regarded as God's way of fulfilling Guru Nanak's mission. Guru Gobind Singh's own verse, no different from Guru Nanak's in its transcendental quality, bears witness to this. In practice, a strictly ethical and moral discipline was evolved and adhered to. No distinction was made between the Hindu and the Muslim. Several staunch followers of Islam did, in fact, align themselves with the Guru against the imperial armies. Pir Buddhu Shah, a Muslim leader of considerable religious influence, took part in battle on his side along with his sons and disciples. A joint, harmonious Hindu-Muslim being was as much a reality in Guru Gobind Singh's vision as in Guru Nanak's. To quote a hymn by Guru Gobind Singh:

... Hindus and Muslims are one!
 The same Lord is the creator and nourisher of all;
 Recognize no distinctions between them.
 The monastery and the mosque are the same;
 So are the Puja and the Namaz.
 Men are all one!

This might well have been a quotation from Guru Nanak.

Sensitivity to contemporary reality was not alien to Guru Nanak's own contemplation. In spite of the pacific temper of his teaching, there is noticeable in it a note of sternness towards injustice, oppression and cruelty. Deeply telling was the reference, in his *sabds* known as *Babar-bani*, to the invasion of India by Babar's armies. The agony of the situation and the sufferings of both Hindus and Muslims were rendered by him in accents of intense power and protest. What happened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh was a natural consequence of the interaction of the impulse on which the emerging faith had been nurtured and the peculiar situation he was confronted with.

Guru Gobind Singh ended the line of personal Gurus and passed on the succession to the holy book, the *Guru Granth*. He declared to the Sikhs at the time of his death that the Word as embodied in the *Granth* would be the Guru after him. "The Guru's spirit," said he, "will henceforth be in the *Granth* and the Khalsa. Where the *Granth* is with any five Sikhs as representing the Khalsa, there will the Guru be." Then, in confirmation of the new rank bestowed upon it, he bowed before the *Guru Granth* and made the offering to it.

For Sikhs the *Guru Granth* has since been the manifestation of the Guru's spirit. Through it Guru Nanak lives on in the Sikh faith and tradition as a reality transcending the time-and-space setting. This awareness of the indwelling presence of the Guru has been of crucial importance to the Sikh community as a whole as well as to its members individually. It has been an impelling factor in their history; it has been their strength, hope and inspiration. It has given them unity, coherence and a sense of purpose and moulded their ideals, institutions and customs through the centuries. Singly and in groups they practise this presence daily when, in their homes and in the congregations in the Gurdwaras, they conclude their morning and evening prayers or prayer said at any other time as part of personal piety or of a ceremony with the words: *Nānak nām chardhī kalā tere bhāne sarbatt kā bhalā*—May God's name, His glory be forever in the ascendant, Nanak! And may peace and prosperity come to all!

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V

THE RELIGIOUS, THE SACRED AND THE HOLY: GURU NANAK AND SECULARIZATION

DAVID B. HARNED

In *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, Paul Tillich suggests that a contemporary dialogue between the religious traditions of the world reflects the ways in which all of them have recently been attacked by "quasi-religions" such as nationalism and secularism. Consequently, he predicts that the dialogue will become less an investigation of theological niceties than an inquiry into the situation of the modern world, as "particular theological points become of secondary importance in view of the position of defence of all religions proper."¹ The forces that presently conspire against traditional forms of piety are the consequences of "the invasion of all religious groups by technology with its various waves of technical revolution. Its effect was and is, first of all, a secularization which destroys the old traditions, both of culture and religion."²

This sort of argument requires qualification. The processes of secularization are far more hostile towards ideology than towards religion; in the long run, they are most hostile towards the most conservative ideologies. To the extent that the quasi-religions of which Tillich writes are conservative ideological movements — National Socialism, for example — it would be difficult to trace their paternity to secularization. Secularism is both conservative and ideological. No matter how various and baneful some of the consequences of secularization may be, secularism is finally not one of them. It is important to recognize the tension between the two. Nevertheless, one strand of Tillich's argument is persuasive and significant — the contention that secularization means the transformation rather than the demise of man's religiousness, although probably not in the direction of quasi-religious ideologies. Secularization seems dialectically related to religion: hostile towards tradition but hospitable to something new.

But the Dutch missionary theologian, Arend van Leeuwen, understands the modern situation in very different terms in *Christianity in World History*. He tells us of "the arrival of a new type of man" who views himself and his world without recourse to religious premises. Arend

van Leeuwen suggests that the technological revolution is only one aspect of a more complex movement that is rapidly destroying the cornerstone of all traditional forms of society, whether primitive or civilized religion. Man is *homo religiosus* no more. In this he sees no reason for lament, but argues that where the Christian message is believed, "there is the truth accepted that there can be no returning the age of 'religion.'"³

Secularization is a global phenomenon that profoundly distinguishes contemporary societies from their predecessors; it is an appropriate ground base for essays on the encounters of religious traditions in the modern world. The differences between Tillich and van Leeuwen reflect the thoroughly diverse assessments of secularization now current in the West. Some writers stress the hostility towards traditional forms of faith, whereas others find equal reason to emphasize its connections with the Judaeo-Christian tradition and often interpret this relationship in more or less normative terms. Some write of secularization in the context of an analysis of social institutions, whereas others understand it very differently because their concern is with the members of society. The confusion suggests that we have not yet put our semantic household in order: the word is used in a bewildering variety of ways, and much the same must also be said of "religion."⁴ Nevertheless, the differences between Tillich and van Leeuwen are more than semantic. With which one does the truth lie? Or is secularization so complex and ambiguous a phenomenon that their perspectives are complementary rather than conflicting? If so, what does this signify for the future of the religious traditions of man?

In the words of Peter L. Berger, secularization designates "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols." He adds that "as there is a secularization of society and culture, so is there a secularization of consciousness."⁵ The latter often seems verifiable in the attitudes of our contemporaries and within ourselves, but with what accuracy or by what standards might one gauge the "secularization of consciousness?" Every attempt to measure it risks the danger of some restrictive definition of religion that would quite illegitimately exclude the creation of private structures of meaning which possess "ultimate" significance for individuals who are otherwise alienated from traditional religious symbols and establishments. It would be a mistake, for example, to employ a standard that would not admit the religiosity manifest in the ways in which institutions such as family or caste or nation are invested with mythic properties and function as objects of "ultimate" commitment.

There is considerable evidence that as the influence of traditional religious institutions declines, the secular aspects of society develop religious dimensions. In the United States, for example, a Manichean

stance towards life that often appears in political affairs, a Pelagian faith in education as the panacea for all ills, a perennial tendency to celebrate the divinity of power, the sacralizing of the medical profession—these and much else bear witness to a religious impulse as powerful as it seems ineradicable. The putative “secularization of consciousness” may pertain to certain traditional systems of symbols rather than to the character of man. The passionate and often eloquent romanticism evident in the dissenting movements of alienated students, the cult of the hero for a day drawn from the realm of entertainment or politics, the cult of youth with its pervasive cosmetic impulse and faith in drugstore magic, the Gnosticism manifest in certain types of reliance upon drugs, the hardness of mythologies about sex and all of the *vestigia religionis* imbedded in popular music suggest that man is *homo religiosus* still.

If Tillich's argument requires the qualification that the process of secularization is hostile towards ideology, the argument is valid in other ways: religion may be transformed, it has scarcely disappeared. Many of its contemporary forms profoundly endanger the health of man and his society.⁶

As the removal of sectors of society from domination by religious establishments and symbols, what secularization actually designates is institutional autonomy, *Egengesetzlichkeit*. Because of the impact of modernization and industrialization, segments of the social structure become independent. They liberate themselves from a “sacred canopy.”⁷ The legitimation of the economic system, for example, is no longer derived from beyond itself; it is justified entirely in terms of its own functional logic. As Robert Nisbet writes, “The time has passed when technology needs to justify itself by its contributions to other spheres of society. Today the ends of technology are sufficient and autonomous.”⁸

The movement towards autonomy by the primary social institutions is inevitably accompanied with the development of institutional specialization in religion. In other words, because the traditional complex of “ultimate” means and norms is no longer disseminated and affirmed by the primary institutions, the main job must be done by a special organization. But when the latter voices many of these meanings and norms, they are exposed as “mere rhetoric.” They are not necessarily contradicted by the standards and functional logic of the primary institutions. There is simply no relation between the two at all. Sooner or later, the processes of secularization seem dramatically and irremediably to undercut the credibility of religious institutions. As the liberation of economy and the State and other segments of culture from the comforts and constraints of a sacred cosmos, there is a sense in which secularization does mean the end of religion: primary institutions, if not individuals, become autonomous. This process eventually torpedoes the religious establishments it originally nourished. So van Leeuwen's comments about “the arrival of a new type of man” have their justification. There

is a new man abroad, indeed. He is new in the sense that the primary social institutions no longer function for him as they have for his ancestors. As Thomas Luckmann has phrased it:

Specific segments of an individual's daily conduct derive their meaning from specific institutional norms, but mutually reinforcing institutions no longer endow the individual course of life with "ultimate" significance. The social structure ceases to mediate in a consistent manner between the sacred cosmos and subjective consciousness.⁹

II

Although the structures of society are becoming secularized, there is considerable evidence that the members of society are not. Nevertheless, secularization does involve the transformation of religion. Man's religious quest becomes a private affair in several different and unprecedented ways. It is scarcely nourished by a participation in the primary public institutions; most men must look elsewhere, if they are to find the meaning of their individual lives. "Personal identity becomes, essentially, a private phenomenon. This is, perhaps, the most revolutionary trait of modern society."¹⁰ Furthermore, the way that the quest is resolved depends more upon private preference than upon traditional prescription. It is difficult to invest much confidence in traditional religious institutions when their "comprehensive" claims and norms are relevant neither to the functional logic of the primary public institutions nor to the performance of the individual within them. In the end, men tend to invest certain aspects of their private lives with a new freight of significance. The private realm is sacralized as the public grows profane. Religion becomes an eclectic affair in which some residual traditional values are combined with others that are new and drawn mainly from the private sphere.

The social form of religion emerging in modern industrial societies is characterized by the direct accessibility of an assortment of religious representations to potential consumers. The sacred cosmos is mediated neither through a specialized nor through other primary public institutions. It is the direct accessibility of the sacred cosmos, more precisely, of an assortment of religious themes, which makes religion today essentially a phenomenon of the "private sphere." The emerging social form of religion thus differs significantly from older social forms of religion which were characterized either by the diffusion of the sacred cosmos through the institutional structure of society or through institutional specialization of religion.¹¹

Luckmann suggests that secularization can inspire a "mass withdrawal into the 'private sphere,' while 'Rome burns.'"¹² Such withdrawal is essentially a religious phenomenon. It is a recoil from a system that offers the individual little in the way of either personal identity or structures of "ultimate" meaning. There is something Manichean about the sharp juxtaposition of two realms, one sacral and one profane, which must not be mixed because they have no intrinsic relation to each other.

There is something Gnostic about the flight from the constraints of the public sector into the illimitable privacy of the self, where illusions of individual autonomy can be savoured as shadowy compensation for the loss of real agency in the public sphere. Nor does the structure of "ultimate" meanings drawn from the private realm provide any motivation for greater involvement in the public realm, where individual agency has become problematical in any event. Religion becomes warrant for a flight from reality and social responsibility. The pressures of secularization render religion even more ambiguous a phenomenon than it is in traditional society.

If secularization has a profound impact upon individual and institutionalized religiosity, it also raises serious problems for the health and wholeness of the individual. As Gabriel Marcel writes in *The Decline of Wisdom*, the primary danger of our "modern" approach to the world is that reason tends to diminish to the proportions of functional reason. Reflection falls into discredit and both the wisdom it offers and the existential questions that it raises to the light of consciousness are no longer available to men. Vanished is the sense of wonder that sparks the awareness of transcendence in man's encounters with his world, with other selves, and with their ultimate source and end. The premium placed upon functional logic in the process of secularization precipitates a restrictive understanding of reason that vitiates man's ability to comprehend the depths of either himself or others.

A second problem is the privatization of the freedom of the individual. In secularized society, man achieves a new freedom and autonomy, but these are confined to the private sphere; in the realm of the public, he is patient rather than agent, and in his relationship to the functional norms of the primary institutions there is no trace of reciprocity at all. Julian N. Hartt writes:

Man does not get on with his proper business in a mood of unrelenting self-seriousness. Contemporary culture lays that mood upon us all. That is a major triumph of secularism as a paradoxically religious force. For if there is no one else to keep an eye on our interests we cannot afford even to close both eyes or even to wink promiscuously.¹³

Such seriousness is exacerbated by the tension between increasingly unlimited power and responsibility and, because of the autonomy of primary institutions, the suspicion that the control of such power no longer lies with the rational decisions of free and responsible men. Still another problem is the quantification of time, the tyranny of the clock that deprives men of spontaneity, further erodes their freedom, and imposes an alien and mechanical pattern upon the rhythms of truly human life. Under the impact of technology, the traditional rhythm of existence is sacrificed in favour of speed and "efficiency." Time becomes a continuum in which man is ineluctably driven towards the loss of power and function, rather than a structure that always affords a "right

time" or *kairos* for some expression of the varied cadences of life.

For consequences of secularization are many and complex. For every society, the process is enormously beneficial. But all human affairs have their ambiguities. The reduction of reason to functional reason, the privatization of freedom and the quantification of the will serve to illustrate the ways in which some of the ambiguities of secularization pertain to the inner life of the self, the agency of the self, and the ambience in which the self exists. Secularization is accompanied with the emergence of protean forms of religiosity, and this is the result of a whole new social form of religion for which there is no precedent in human affairs. Many of these versions of religiosity are retrogressive; all of them, like the new social form of religion itself, can threaten the health and fulfilment of self and society. In this new situation, much that once was sacred has become profane. Much that once was profane has been sacralized. Consequently, the variety of "ultimate" meanings available to the individual bristles with inconsistencies and conflicts between the old and the new.

If this is in any way a persuasive account of the contemporary religious situation, it is evident that the distinctions between the religious and the secular and between the sacred and the profane require reassessment. It is not clear that, as conventionally employed, the polarities are useful for purposes of analysis. It is even less clear that the defence of the religious or of the sacred can be associated with commitment to the holy. Consequently, the life and teachings of Guru Nanak, from whom the Sikh tradition has derived its inspiration, contain a lesson of crucial importance. In this age of secularization, the lesson is no less relevant to the West than to the East. Nanak's devotion to the holy led him outside the territories where the *homines religiosi* dwell and beyond the precincts of the sacred. Guru Nanak learnt that before the holy nothing is sacred and nothing is profane. Religious wiles do not suffice to attain the holy, nor do secular ways bar man from it. In a time when old religious institutions, customs and beliefs are crumbling while new forms of religiosity proliferate, the urgent need for sureness in spiritual discrimination is perhaps best satisfied by Guru Nanak's protest against the religious and the sacred, and his insistence that, in the end, nothing matters except God.

III

The distinction between the religious and the secular is unsatisfactory, because it contributes neither to the clarity of vision nor to the sensitivity of faith. What is conventionally regarded as "religious" is constantly a prey to various types of "secularizing." Religious obligations come to be performed mechanically, by rote, without passion and existential involvement. Motivation for their performance is secularized as the

obligations themselves are understood in functional terms — not as expressions of devotion but rather for the sake of gain, sometimes transcendent adjustment. So the “religious” is not religious at all. On the institutional level, the religious establishment becomes inextricably involved with the secular in many ways, representing and sacralizing the particular way of life of the people, serving purposes of social control and social integration, reaffirming common mores rather than exposing them to the judgement of God.¹⁴

On the other hand, we have already commented upon the constant emergence of new forms of religiosity within the precincts of the secular. This is reflected in common linguistic usage; one can be “religious” in one’s devotion to family or sports, to newspaper comics or to some particular brand of a commodity. Nor can religion be identified merely with certain rituals, for the secular has its rites and the most mundane activities are often highly ritualized. When “religious” is used, in any static or quantifying way, to designate existential participation in these, it has very little meaning. So the distinction between religious and secular leads nowhere except to confusion. In the contemporary situation it is particularly dangerous, because it tends to involve the juxtaposition of public and private realms. Therefore it suggests a “religious” or divinely sanctioned basis for alienation and withdrawal from the “religious” public realm—and so Rome may burn, indeed. Most important, it obscures the fundamental truth that man finds freedom and fulfilment in God alone, and not in any variety of *ortho-praxis* or *ortho-doxa*.

The life and teachings of Guru Nanak offer consistent evidence of his distrust of rite and ritual; few have recognized so well that faith in God does not commit a man to travel down religious ways. Guru Nanak’s protest is not directed against form as such, but against the assumption that certain forms have intrinsic and inalienable meaning simply because they are religious. His words, “At the place of pilgrimage, no bath avails without His favour,”¹⁵ betray neither romantic yearning for the boundless nor Gnostic recoil from the definite. His scepticism of the externalities of piety has a different focus: if religious practices have their own immanent and inalienable value, religion has dwindled to magic. It does not offer the individual access to the holy but bars him from it, by fostering the illusion that man can manipulate the will of God. At Hardwar,

Some people were throwing water towards the sun while they bathed in the Ganges. “O men, what are you doing? said the Gurn. We are offering water to our dead ancestors living in the sun,” said they. At this, the Guru began throwing water in the opposite direction with both hands. When they asked what strange thing he was doing, he replied, “I am watering my fields of wheat in the Punjab.”¹⁶

When the crowd laughed, Guru Nanak suggested to the pilgrims that his watering was probably as effective for the wheat in the Punjab as

was theirs for the ancestors living in the sun.

While Guru Nanak does not question the sincerity of the pilgrims at Hardwar, his protest against the formalities of religion in the *Japji* recognizes the ways in which observances can be "secularized" until no trace of existential involvement remains:

Pilgrimage and penance and free-will giving
Gain for one no single grain of merit,
Unless one harken and his heart be loving,
Cleansed within by a meditative bath.¹⁷

But Guru Nanak's scepticism rests neither upon his conviction that forms are without meaning until they are invested with significance by human passion, nor upon his belief that religious forms contain no intrinsic power to offer man access to the Ultimate Reality. His protest is rooted in a profound sense of the holy, its ontological immanence and moral transcendence.

On the one hand, God pervades the whole world and dwells in the minds and hearts of the faithful. He creates, sustains and cherishes all things: "The whole creation that I see, it came of his exertion."¹⁸ When the rites and rituals of the temple function to render men indifferent to what lies outside the temple, so that the pervasive presence of God and his concern for the world are forgotten, religion is the enemy of the holy. On the other hand, the Lord acknowledged in the temple is one whose moral demands confront the self in every situation, and "Men's deeds indicate if God is near or far."¹⁹ As the story of Guru Nanak at Kurukshetra illustrates, when the practice of piety becomes surrogate for morality, religion has diverted men from the holy.

During a great fair, the Guru was at Kurukshetra. He asked Mardana to go and get fire to cook his meal, and Mardana went and touched the fire of an "orthodox." The orthodox cried out in rage, and fell upon Mardana, whereupon the Guru said:

"The evil is still in his mind, hatred resides in the heart; and yet his cooking-square is pure! Of what use are these lines of the square when low caste thoughts still sit with him in his mind?"²⁰

In Nanak's own humility and teachings, there is a constant insistence on man's unworthiness before God and need for grace. This theme, more than any other, precludes every attempt to exalt the religious at the expense of the secular:

The Lord is true, plainly known, his living kindness infinite;
To those who crave and seek he gives, gives with full abandon.
What indeed must he be offered to throw his court wide open?
What words must lips be uttering to make his love responsive?²¹

In the end, the paraphernalia of religion is unavailing if man is without grace, and unnecessary if man has received it. "All good is thine, no single virtue have I, and without it what avails devotion?"²² What are the grounds for confidence in any forms or practices, when "He bestows the virtue in whose hand the power lies?"²³ Consequently, a style of life that betrays no acquaintance with things religious need not separate

an individual from the mercy of God, as the tale of Duni Chand and his wife suggests.²⁴ This emphasis upon grace contains no hint of antinomism, as the incident at Kurukshetra reveals; its source is simply an overwhelming sense of the holiness of the ultimate.

In the Christian tradition of the West, the fundamental justification of liturgies and other religious practices is that these represent the way of Jesus the Christ. In some sense, indeed, he is present within them. Their purpose is to acquaint believers so intimately with the Christ that they will be able to recognize and respond to the Christic shape of divine activity in the contemporary world. Liturgy and ritual, therefore, are oriented more towards the world than towards the temple; their meaning transcends the distinction between the religious and the secular. Nevertheless, these practices constantly become ends in themselves, their essential significance ignored; they afford opportunities for retreat from the world rather than resources offered for venturing into the world. Sociological studies of the social functionality of the churches and of the conduct of their members reaffirm the opinion of commonsense: the "orthodox" are with us always, and not only at Kurukshetra. And things religious offer no cure for what ails them.

Guru Nanak sensed the presence of God pervading all creation and he believed in the concern of God for everything that was created. So he was drawn outside the precincts of the *homines religiosi* to espouse a sort of "holy worldliness." He was overwhelmed with the mystery and cruciality of grace. So he recognized the powerlessness of things religious to offer man access to the holy. His awareness of the susceptibility of religion either to secularization, or to declension into magic strengthened a scepticism that was essentially theological. In the name of God, Guru Nanak became a critic of what was religious and a friend of what was not. He provides a paradigm for the man of faith in the modern world. The quest for the holy — as well as serious investigation of the actualities of our common life — transcends and invalidates the distinction between the religious and the secular. In an age when religiosity assumes protean forms but remains largely anchored in the private realm, when religious institutions grow secular or irrelevant, the scepticism and worldliness of Guru Nanak provide two of the greatest resources in the struggle for the humanity of man. The polarity of the religious and the secular is foreign to the spirit of the Sikh tradition; the West will be better when it has been forgotten there, too. The religious cannot be identified with the holy. The non-religious cannot be identified as the enemy of God.

IV

One who recognizes the tension between the religious and the holy is sceptical of either the emergence of new forms of religiosity on "secular" soil or the retreat from the secular to a private realm for "religious"

reasons. The commonness of both phenomena in the modern world confronts us anew with the distinction between the sacred and the profane. The inadequacy of this polarity is revealed by the fact that the sacred can be profaned until it is sacred no longer. Because it can be stained by dirty hands, the sacred is not essentially related to the holy. As Julian N. Hartt has well phrased the matter:

One might seriously believe that something really holy has in fact been profaned by a religious insistence that it is sacred ; and thereafter one might devote great energy and skill to attacking that barrier in the hope that the holy might come into its own. If, that is, one believed that sexuality were holy, one might attack the sacred institutions that have effectively made it dirty and trite or both. And if one believed that freedom were holy, one might well feel inspired to attack the sacred institutions that have effectively corrupted it. Thus the sacred emerges as that which men have arbitrarily demarcated as exempt from judgement and change ; and thereafter used to protect a stake demonstrably narrower than the common good of mankind.²⁵

The sacred emerges as the unstable and arbitrary, a realm within which the exercise of human agency and inventiveness is suspect, if not stifled. Distinctions between what is sacred and profane lead ineluctably towards idolatry. The meaning of the latter is simply that the sacred is confused with the holy, the symbol identified with what it symbolizes, the transcendence of the holy over any and all of its manifestations forgotten. The sacred is intended to point towards an element of ultimacy in human life towards which man might otherwise be indifferent. But the perennial human predicament is one not of indifference towards "ultimate" meanings but of idolatrous reverence for what is not truly ultimate. The demarcation of sacred realms is scarcely a cure for the disease.

The same dialectic appears in the relation of the religious and the secular. On the one hand, the sacred is either profaned or eventually becomes an idol, just as the religious is vulnerable to secularization, or to declension into magic. On the other hand, what has been profane is sacralized, especially in a revolutionary situation when processes such as secularization engender a redirection of the search for "ultimate" meanings. Sacralization may be initiated as a response to the holy—or it may have important motivations. Certain mores or institutions may be deliberately designated as sacred for purposes of social integration or control, quite without concern for the will of God. In any event, the polarity of the sacred and the profane does not serve the interests of the man of faith. It blunts man's powers of discrimination, especially when employed in any static fashion. The distinction is invidious towards the profane and obscures the important truth that profanation can be and often is an act of obedience to the dictates of God. Man finds fulfilment only in the holy, not in the sacred. The sacred robs him of his freedom.

Modernization and industrialization liberate persons and societies in countless ways. But it is no less true that one of the salient marks of this age is an individual's loss of agency and autonomy in the public sector under the impact of secularization. Insistence that one comes to the holy by way of the sacred simply increases the loss of agency and autonomy, exempting still other areas from reconstruction by man's inventiveness. Men's eyes are turned away from public affairs as they search for some putatively sacred realm. So the sacred becomes one of the factors that conspire towards the dehumanization of man; it is opposed to and by the holy, which is the source and sustainer of man's agency and freedom. A faith that transcends the polarity of the sacred and the profane is a necessary resource in the struggle against quasi-religions, such as nationalism. It is equally necessary for the articulation of strategies of human renewal that will be unencumbered by shibboleths concerning what might appear sacred but is neither sensible nor significant.

In the life and teachings of Guru Nanak, scepticism and a sort of holy worldiness were nourished and supported by a passionate mysticism. While the latter can be defined in many ways, essentially it involves the recognition of the inadequacy of the distinction between the sacred and the profane. It means a commitment not only to what lies outside the temple but also to what dwells beyond the temple. In the name of what is beyond, it is critical of what lies within the temple and the other sacred precincts in which *homines religiosi* conduct their affairs. Although the quest of the mystic can be fulfilled only by grace beyond deserving, the preparation for the gift of God is an exemplary instance and vindication of the freedom and agency of the individual.

Among the tales of the boy Nanak, there is a memorable instance of profanation—an insistence, in the name of God, upon the profaneness of what is held to be sacred. The holy will of God cannot be adequately expressed by what is commonly regarded as the realm of the sacred nor satisfied by man's participation in the sacred. When the family Brahmin came to invest him with the sacred thread, he spoke again, subduing all that heard:

Oh, Brahmin! You have no sacred thread.
 If you have, give me the forgiveness of the Creator.
 Draw round me a sacred line that no desires cross,
 Unfold the Divine in me,
 Which then will be a sacred thread—
 Never showing wear or break.²⁶

When men are confronted by the mystery of the holy, faith calls them to venture beyond the precincts and distinctions in which they had once sought refuge or security. God discloses himself as omnipresent, pervading all of his creation as well as transcending it. He can be named in many ways and worshipped at many altars, but only when these are radically relativized by awareness that no name or altar excludes another, for the Lord is in all, beyond all, more than all:

There is no final knowledge of the forms He takes,
 Nor any limit within which to know Him.
 It is not possible to find His boundary,
 There is no one this sort of end to know.
 The more that is said leaves more yet for the saying.²⁷

The sovereignty of God as well as his omnipresence renders suspect the idea of the sacred. The Lord who cannot be localized in time or space does not give himself over to be contained within walls. The tale of Guru Nanak at Mecca suggests not only the folly of certain religious observances but also the irrelevance of the whole idea of the sacred and the profane. What is profane, when God indwells His whole creation and "everywhere is His seat and everywhere His home?"²⁸

Nanak the Master was at Mecca. The Master slept out of doors with his feet turned inadvertently towards the *Quaba*, the House of God. The chief priest of the place came and said "O forgetful stranger! Awake and see your feet are turned towards the House of God!" The Guru replied: "Is it so? Pray, turn my feet yourself in the direction where the House of God is not."²⁹

In fact, nothing is profane, unless the hand or the eye of man renders it so; nothing is sacred, for those who will be content with nothing less than holiness.

The Lord who discloses himself as omnipresent and sovereign remains a mystery in his self-disclosure. No rite can capture his ways, no word or image expresses his nature. Even the richest wares in the realm of the sacred, therefore, consist of no more than

Symbols which at most have partial value,
 Falling short of power for describing
 That which of itself assumes incalculable forms;
 Who leans on words repents of their employment.³⁰

Whoever leans on knowledge or austerities, on rituals or acts of devotion, on the capacities of the self or of human institutions, repents of their employment. In the end, neither the religious nor the sacred avail at all. Nothing avails, or prevails, except the mercy and grace of *Satguru*. While He remains a mystery, there is nothing arbitrary in his ways. If faith can never dispel his mysteriousness, it can discover a mingling of sovereignty with mercy that exposes the inadequacy of the idea of the sacred — just as faith has already discovered a constant and pervasive presence that transforms the profane into "many issues out of one source flowing — a hundred thousand rivers from one spring."³¹

Much more will be written about the one who, in the words of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "in spiritually passionate and directly personalistic poetry and in a life of humane and humble service, preached sincerity and adoration and the overwhelming reality of God."³² In the context of commentary in recent social change, this paper is intended to portray a man who was grasped by the holy and led away from the distinctions between the religious and the secular and between the sacred and the profane. In that adventure of Guru Nanak, there lies

a profound moral for our time and, perhaps, the greatest resources for the redeeming of the times. Guru Nanak found reason and strength in the holy to venture outside and to venture beyond the temple. Beneath his mixture of worldliness and mysticism lay the conviction that man is the architect of his own destiny on this earth, even though salvation comes from God alone. "A man's self sows and likewise reaps while under His command, saith Nanak."³³ God does not seem to be associated with *karma* and transmigration; instead, He is the one who liberates those who trust him from the control of *karma* and the cycle of rebirth. The holy is the liberator. As one who frees, he inspires and legitimates entrance into the world that he pervades.³⁴

In commenting on the thirty-fifth through the thirty-seventh psalms of the *Japji*, John Clark Archer writes:

Nanak proposes the superiority of the "way of truth," which Nirankar commends, over the "knowledge portion" and the "action portion," over the way of "knowledge" and the way of "works." He even commends this way of truth as superior to the *bhakti*-way of salvation — truth is more valid than devotion! And yet... Nanak was virtually preaching the *bhakti* or "devotion" way whose inspiration, support and destination would be realized, as he thought and said, in *Sat Nam*, True Name. The *bhakti-marga* is to Nanak, we might say, the true way if pursued in the True Name. He proposed, even though not deliberately, a fourth way of salvation, more instrumental and effective than any one or all of the other three.³⁵ A fourth way? Certainly a path that led outside the realm of the religious and beyond the sphere of the sacred, a way that rejoiced in the density and texture of what less discriminating eyes might have regarded as secular or profane, for *Sat Nam* "Seest even the little insect that crawleth, and thus countest the corn he swalloweth with his little mouth."³⁶

Perhaps what Archer suggests might be rephrased in this way:

—If the way of works is pursued in the name of *Sat Nam*, men will await the initiative of God in the confidence that it awards them liberty and agency of their own.

—If the way of knowledge is followed in the name of *Sat Nam*, men will recognize that what seems secular or profane has much to yield careful scrutiny.

—If the way of devotion means devotion of *Sat Nam*, men will be satisfied neither by the religious nor by the sacred but only in the holy.

Secularization is the dynamic within the revolutions of our time. Five centuries after his birth, Guru Nanak's life and teaching seem strangely contemporary, their relevance undiminished and, perhaps, greater now than hitherto. When a new social form of religion that is the offspring of secularization threatens to provide religious sanction for withdrawal from the public realm, we must recognize that defence of what is religious cannot be identified with commitment to the holy. When the conflicts that have ravaged the modern world have originated in the sacralizing of caste or class or nation, we must recognize that

loyalty to the sacred cannot be identified with faith in God. When secularization threatens much of life with dehumanization, we must recognize that God calls men outside the temple, pervades his whole creation, and acts to liberate men as agents there. When the religious is secularized while the secular engenders new forms of religiosity, when what once was private and profane is sacralized while old ideas of the sacred dissolve, we must recognize that these polarities bring nothing to the clarity of vision or to the sensitivity of faith. When secularization gives men reason to doubt the power of their agency in the public realm, the sacred looms as another barrier to that liberation of the self which represents the will of God. When the religious grows indistinguishable from magic and the sacred from an idol, the way of the mystic becomes the instrument of divine judgement and primary means of access to God.

Perhaps no Mardana will accompany us in our pursuit of the holy, but the music of the psalms of Guru Nanak haunts the world still. Let us sing with him.

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 16. Puran Singh, *The First Master—Guru Nanak* (Punjabi University Press, 1969), p. 17.
 17. Psalm 21.
 18. Psalm 6.
 19. Postlude to the Psalms.
 20. Singh, op. cit., pp. 17-18.
 21. Psalm 4.
 22. Psalm 21.
 23. Psalm 33.
 24. Singh, op. cit., pp. 8-9.
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 26. Singh, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
 27. Psalm 24.
 28. Psalm 31.
 29. Singh, op. cit., p. 16.
 30. Psalm 36.
 31. Psalm 16.
 32. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, op. cit., p. 67.
 33. Psalm 20.
 34. In this connection, Archer's comments are particularly interesting: "The early records which *do* mention Nanak put no stress on politics. Rather, they represent him as avoiding it. And yet, there was something in him, in his movement and in his times as he affected them, which was destined to be tested by political affairs of the state. Was there something worldly after all in Nanak? And are not politics in the long run an inescapable and valid test of faith? The final estimate of Nanak, therefore, is a matter of the centuries, including likewise the present fateful years, of India's history," op. cit., pp. 106-107.
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 36. Singh, op. cit., p. 23.

VI

GURU NANAK'S CONCEPT OF NATURE

KAPUR SINGH

This paper deals with the following problem: Guru Nanak in his writings (*gurubani* — the voice of the Light, according to the Sikh creed), while formulating the philosophic bases of the Sikh religion, has employed an Arabic word, *qudret*.¹ It is a philosophical term correlated to the time-honoured Sanskrit term, *purusa*. In the traditional philosophic system of India, *purusa* is correlated to the term, *prakriti*. All religious systems of India, by tradition, must have one of the philosophical schools — six in number — as their base or they must be supported by an authoritative interpretation of the cryptic texts, *Brahmasutra* by Badarayana. Guru Nanak, on the other hand, has either taken ancient philosophical terms of India and then reinterpreted them or, as in the case of the term *qudret*, has picked up a non-Indo-Sanskrit word and then imparted a precise philosophic status to it. Here, it is proposed to examine what the dualism of *purusa* and *prakriti* originally meant in Indian philosophy and what extended and changed meanings the Guru has given to the first term of this dualism, *purusa*. Finally, it is proposed to scrutinize the semantic changes the word *qudret* has undergone till its exaltation as a fundamental philosophical concept of Sikhism. Possible reasons for Guru Nanak's choice of the term *qudret* are also briefly sought to be explained.

Guru Nanak was a prophet of religion, and philosophy was not central to his teachings.

Numerous dogmas there are and as many more are intellectual disciplines. As many are the systems of philosophy. All these, so many of them are the chains that curb the spontaneity of the psyche. For a man of religion, the central concern is the way to liberation.²

But that is not to say that Guru Nanak was unconcerned with the study of the humanities and sciences or placed little value on the culture of the mind.

There are those who are cultured neither in philosophy nor in scripture, nor have developed proper taste for music. And, likewise, there are those who are unacquainted with aesthetics and the arts. They have neither a trained character, nor disciplined intellect, and, as such, they

are devoid of true learning, so much so that the true significance of accumulated human wisdom is outside their sphere of interest. Such people, says Nanak, are true animals for they strut as human beings without the qualifications of a human being.³

Guru Nanak also asserts that:

Intellectual curiosity and scientific knowledge are necessary for removing doubts that beset human understanding.⁴

From this position of Guru Nanak, three propositions follow: (1) intellectual activity is not identical with or directly relevant to religious activity; (2) that, for a properly developed and integrated person, intellectual and scientific studies are imperative; and (3) that, although religion is philosophically indeterminate, philosophical enquiries are necessary for preparing the mind suitably towards the acceptance of religious discipline.

It is in this background that it is proposed to study and examine a philosophical problem which is fundamental to the philosophies of the East and the West and which Guru Nanak has explicitly stated and attempted to answer in his writings.

There are two fundamental concepts that run through almost all systems of Indian philosophy down the ages: the concepts of *purusa* and *prakriti*. Very broadly speaking, these concepts correspond to the concepts of "subject" and "object." The dualism between "mind" and "matter," "life" and "nature" has been recognized by thinkers in all philosophies of the East and the West, but the *Samkhya* system provides the most ancient and systematic speculation on this topic.

This system was founded by Kapila before sixth century B.C., but the original text *Samkhya Sutra* has been irretrievably lost. The basic text we have today is the *Samkhya-Karika* of Isvarakrishna of the fifth century. Commentaries on this text were written by Gaudapada in the seventh century. Another text, the *Samkhya-pravacan*, that has come down to us was considered to be Kapila's original text, but now it has been shown to be a work of the fifteenth century. Commentaries on this text were written by Aniruddha and Vijñānabhikṣu, who belong to the sixteenth century, approximately.

Samkhya doctrines of *purusa* and *prakriti* have undergone developments through the past centuries. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, these concepts of *purusa* and *prakriti* have been given extended and more sophisticated meanings, whereas Vijñānabhikṣu and Aniruddha have developed the classical *Samkhya* still further.

Guru Nanak, in his writings, whereas he has retained the term *purusa* as fundamental to his system of religion, has abandoned altogether the term *prakriti* for this purpose, though he was quite familiar not only with the dualism of these terms, but also with their philosophical import.⁵

The term *purusa*, though retained as fundamental to what might be called the philosophic infrastructure of the religion he revealed, he has

interpreted it altogether otherwise than that in the classical *Samkhya*, the *Karika*, or the *Samkhya* of the *Bhagvad-Gita* or the Neo-*Samkhya* of Aniruddha and Vijñanabhikṣu. For the other term of this dualism, Guru Nanak has employed an Arabic word *qudret* and has relegated the term *prakṛiti* altogether to other contexts.

Let us examine briefly the original connotation of the term *purusa* to distinguish it from the vernacular or *apbhramsha* form of it, *purakh*, as employed by Guru Nanak with an altogether extended and new connotation given it. Let us also examine briefly the philosophical meanings of the term *prakṛiti* as understood in the ancient thought—system of *Samkhya* and to discriminate it from the Arabic word *qudret*, which Guru Nanak has substituted as the second term of this dualism, and speculate upon the reasons for it. Last, we may speculate upon what might be the motivation of Guru Nanak for substituting an Arabic word for one from Sanskrit-based vocabulary which latter was well integrated with Indian modes of philosophic thought.

Since it is not our purpose to write a dissertation on the system of *Samkhya* itself, it is most convenient to confine ourselves to the text of *Samkha-Karika*, for the purpose of examining the terms *purusa* and *prakṛiti*.

The world, manifest or un-manifest, according to *Samkhya*, is not derived from *purusa*, does not have its matrix in the mind. The world is comprehended in the term *purusa*, but does not originate from it and is not grounded in it. This *purusa* is not personal thought; it is discrete and individual (*Karika*, 38).⁶ It is the propinquity of this *purusa* to *prakṛiti* which gives rise to the world of appearances. In the absence of this nearness, the world is there but it simply remains *avyakta*, un-manifest. This world is that which is perceived or witnessed, *lokyanti iti lokah*, and thus the world of appearances serves the purpose of the individual *purusartha* (*Karika*, 63).⁷ This discrete and individual *purusa* is in itself translucent and transparent; it is a witness; it is a fact of consciousness and that is its primary mode of function, witnessing or seeing the world (*Karika*, 19).⁸ It is inherent in this primary function of the *purusa* that by so functioning it appears different from what it is; it appears as if it were a panorama of appearances, and appearances likewise appear as if they were possessed of consciousness. That is how a double obfuscation afflicts the basic human situation, namely concerning its awareness of the world and of himself (*Karika*, 20).⁹ The *purusa* appears as what it is not and the *prakṛiti* appears other than itself. This double negation occurs because of the very nature of the *purusa* which has its function as witness and to reflect or to appear as what it is not. In order to be what it is, it must appear as what it is not. It is to the implications of this doctrine that Bhai Nand Lal Goya, a contemporary and beloved disciple of the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, refers in his Persian poem.

We understand not that, from the beginning of Time, the human consciousness constitutes the instrumentality through which the Maker of appearances builds a mansion for Himself.¹⁰

It follows that in this arrangement between *purusa* and the process of *purusartha*, "for the sake of the *purusa*" no consciousness, deity or mind functions in the genesis of the manifest world. In its own nature, and by itself the world is simply *avyakta* (un-manifest) as long as it is not in the vicinity of the *purusa*. The ultimate *avyakta*, *mulaprakriti*, is a confection of three *gunas*, but these *gunas* do not become creative unless in the presence of the *purusa*. In its primal state, the *avyakta* potentially contains everything that is in the manifest world, but in, and of, itself it is just an unconditioned, un-manifest, plenitude of being which is completely and utterly unconscious (*Karika*, 11).¹¹ The manifest world begins to emerge or unfold when *purusa* comes into the proximity of this *avyakta*, the plenitude of the unmanifest being. The *gunas*, three in number, *triguna*, in admixture with the *mulaprakriti*, give rise to a series of evolutes or emergents from which is created the world of appearances. These *gunas* extend through the *avyakta* and *vyakta*, and they are continually modified and transformed in the proximity of the *purusa*. They constitute the psychophysical make-up of human nature and they likewise constitute the nature of everything non-human and inorganic and, thus, they represent the fundamental structure of both the worlds, the seen and the unseen. In themselves, however, they are wholly and utterly unconscious and like the *mulaprakriti* they are absolutely separate from the *purusa* (*Karika*, 14).¹²

Thus in this *Samkhya* philosophy, the fundamental categories recognize no consciousness, or absolute, or a creator God. It does not deny the existence of gods, or even a God, the only and lonely God. The God or the gods, indeed, may exist but they can be no more than products of the interaction of unconscious *mulaprakriti* and the conscious *purusa*, and the unconscious *gunas*.

It follows that this dualism of the ancient Indian *Samkhya* focuses on the distinction of the conscious and the unconscious, that between individual consciousness as one term and the unconscious as the other term. It is not the dualism of "mind" and "body" or the dualism of "thought" and "extension." "Thought" and "extension," "mind" and "body" are regarded simply as different dimensions or attributes of the world of appearances and this unity of "thought" and "extension" is supported by the doctrine of the *gunas*, which functions without hindrance on both the psychological and gross physical levels. The *purusa*, the essence of which is consciousness is not a part of the manifest world which is unconsciousness. The *purusa* is simply the fact of impersonal consciousness, not to be confused with *buddhi*, the intellect, *ahamkara*, the I-consciousness, or *manas*, the mind. The *ahamkara* and *manas* are the

evolutes of the three fundamental categories. Since the *mulaprakriti*, in admixture with the three *gunas*, makes up everything that constitutes the manifest world, including mental dimensions of the nature and man, the *purusa* is simply the presence of emptiness; as pure consciousness it simply witnesses or sees. It appears as what it is not, but its appearance is what it is. The content of this *purusa* can only be what it is not. Consciousness is always consciousness of something and pure consciousness is beyond the grasp of the mind and the intellect.

The insight is the *hridaya*, the heart, of the contribution of the *Samkhya* made to the philosophy and those so interested might find it rewarding to search for basic similarities between the *Samkhya* and the phenomenology of Sartre.¹³

The *Tantrayana* or *Vajrayana* school of Buddhism, founded in the fourth century by Arya Asanga, adopted this insight as the base of the doctrine of *Sunyata*, the basic emptiness that sustains the human situation, the world and man's awareness of it, *dridham saramasausiryam achhedya abhedya laksnam adahi avinasi ca sunyata vajra mucayate* (*Sunayata* is designated as *vajra*, because it is firm, sound, cannot be pierced, cannot be penetrated, cannot be burnt and cannot be destroyed).

It is this insight on which are based the most charming pieces of poetic imagery in the ancient text of *Samkhya-Karika* which tell us that,

after showing her face to the *purusa* the *prakriti* disappears like a dancer after her enchanting performance on the stage. (59)

This is my considered view that there is nothing more sensitive and shy than *prakriti* who, once she knows that she has been seen by the *purusa*, never again unveils her bewitching face to the *purusa*. (61)¹⁴

It is on this insight that the Sikh doctrine of the utter irrelevance of science and objective knowledge to the penultimate goal of religion, namely deliverance from the bondage of *samsar*, the transmigration, is based.

Science purporting to be an end in itself is weariness of flesh and waste of soul.¹⁵

In the writings of Guru Nanak, the decisive argument against the utter irrelevance of objective science, and, by implication, against contemporary Western scientism is that by objectively becoming preoccupied with the phenomenal world, man inevitably becomes drawn into the morass of conjectures and illusions and, therefore, drawn away from the possibility of release or deliverance. The wish for exactitude of scientism can be shown as being far from constituting a guarantee of intrinsic value and spiritual legitimacy for the simple reason that the exactitude in question is already jeopardized by the most serious begging of the question: that is, scientism by denying the intellect and the Absolute rejects *a priori*

the certainty of all knowledge. This argument, in essence, occurs clearly and succinctly in the ancient Buddhist text, *Lankavatarasutra* (400 A.D.) which runs as follows:

They do not understand that the objective world derives from the mind itself and do not grasp that the whole system of thought likewise derives from the mind; but attributing reality to these manifestations of mind they examine them, senseless people that they are, and get attached to dualities such as "this" and "that" or "being" or "not-being" without realizing that there is but a single Essence.

The religious system and the way of life which Guru Nanak revealed and preached are based on the philosophical doctrines that the one Absolute *Purusa*, both as self-conscious and unconscious, is the matrix of the world and not simply a term in a confection or admixture. That the world has a Creator, that as created Nature it has no absolute basis or essence independently and apart from this *Purusa*, and last, that the relation between the Creator and the created Nature is not a separate and independent category of existence, but is merely an extension, an emanation of this *Purusa*. This One Absolute *Purusa* is to be contradistinguished from the *Purusa* of the Vedas repeatedly described in all the four Vedas;¹⁶ in *Purusasukta*, as "a fourth of Him is all beings and the three-fourths is in immortal heavens." This Vedic *Purusa* is not the Creator or Controller of the world but just the neutral stuff of the manifest and the unmanifest worlds, not fundamentally and essentially different from the *purusa* of the *Samkhya*.

The first of these two doctrines stems from the *Samkhya* dualism of *purusa* and *prakriti*, and the third, out of a pivotal problem of the nature of relation. In modern Western philosophy, Hume brought the problem of relation to the forefront, particularly the problem of the causal relation. But his formulation of this problem is in a very different context from that of the Indian philosophy, as Hume was attacking it in the context of British Empiricism. His problem is epistemological in nature, whereas that raised in Indian philosophy is metaphysical in nature where the question asked straightway is whether the relations are real.

Two basic features of our experience are identity and difference and we find them in our experience as subject as well as object. All pairs of categories, "subject" and "object," "substance" and "mind," "universal" and "particular," can be reduced to these two basic aspects of human experience, identity and difference. These two aspects are inevitably related to each other. They are not jumbled together. What is the nature of this relation between the two, and if this relation is real, how can both belong to one and the same thing, because both are opposed to each other fundamentally? Either the difference and the identity and the relation, all three, are equally real or the relation

between the two is false, whereas the two are real, or last, it might be that the relation as well as one of the relata is false. Of course, there is a fourth logical possibility that the identity, the difference as well as the relation might be equally false, implicating the ultimate *sunyata*, just as the *Vajrayana* Buddhism depicts it. The *Nyaya-vaishesika* and the *Mimamsa*, Jainism and the realist interpretations of *Vedanta* such as *Dvaita*, *Visistadvaita*, *Suddhadvaita* hold that all the three, the relata as well as the relation are real. Without holding this, it is not possible to uphold a pluralist view of reality, because how can there be an unreal relation between the two reals. The doctrine of *Samvaya* (inherence) of *Nyaya-vaishesika* and its doctrine of *asatkaryavada* (the theory that the effect does not pre-exist in its cause) is based on the reality of the relation and the relata. The Buddhist and the Vedantin, accepting the centrality of this problem of relation in the philosophical context of India, attacked the doctrine of the reality of relation with much vigour. The Vedantin attacked it by pressing the question that, if relation is real like the relata, this gives rise to *regressus ad infinitum*. The Buddhist puts the question: "If the relation is as real as the relata, why is it not seen as a thing as the relata are?" This weakness of the realist view of relation has given rise to the concept of release or *moksha*, which is central to all systems of Indian thought. Since *purusa* and *prakriti*, the one representing the identity and the other representing difference, are both real (the relation between the two is not ultimately real), the relation can be eliminated or removed by some technique or know-how, by some discipline or *sadhana* and thus *purusa* and *prakriti* can be released from the bondage of each other and the *purusa* freed from the drudgery of *samsara*.

The possibility of this release is logically implicated by the Buddhist dictum, *yo viruddha dharmadhyasavan ne asau ekah* (that which has opposite attributes cannot be one). There is, however, a flaw in this argument, for, it presupposes that relation merely implies a connection, but it fails to see that it also implies separation. Through rejection of the relation, therefore, they will not fall apart. Anyhow, if the relation between the *purusa* and the *prakriti* is false, what is there to separate the two. In other words, they cannot see that the conception of the two absolutes is self-contradictory, a gross nescience which is sought to be removed in Sikhism in the *Mul-Mantra*,¹⁷ which has the arithmetical numeral '1' as its first term. But if the relation is not real, then the two terms, "identity" and "difference," are false. The Buddhist holds the "identity" as false. That is why the Buddhist rejects the unifying categories such as, "substance" or "universal," (*samanya*), and the Vedantin is in favour of the unifying category of *Atma: brahma satyam jaganmitthya jivabrahmaiva naparah*. The Vedantins and Buddhists both accept the falsity of the relation and also its implication that one of the relata must be false, but yet one goes to accept the

relata of "difference" and the other relata of "identity," and *Vedantins* argue that logically the "identity" is more fundamental than "difference," *abheda purvako bhedah*, while the Buddhist argues that reality must be *arthakriyakarin*, i.e. efficient, whereas the "identity," or "permanence," cannot be efficient. The *coup d'grace*, in this controversy, has been administered by the Madhyamika who rightly detects strains of dogmatism in both the schools which reject one relata and accept the other, and thus he argues that the "identity" and "difference" being correlated must disappear together and since *atmavada* and *anatmavada* are incompatible with each other, both cannot be accepted, but both can be rejected all right. If the falsity of relation leads to the falsity of one relata, the falsity of one relata likewise implicates the falsity of both the relates. This inexorable logic of the Madhyamika exalts the reality to a pedestal which is outside the reach of human experience. This would mean that the reality, or *tattva*, is completely beyond the reach of human experience and thus is logically unrealizable. If that is so, then all quests for the ultimate religious goal, the *summun bonum*, become futile and pointless. In order to remove the stigma of contradiction, the reality must be transcended, but in order to be realizable, it must also be immanent in experience.

It is in this background that Guru Nanak has favoured the three philosophical doctrines stated in the opening pages of this paper.

Guru Nanak, as we have said, employed the word *qudret* as the second term of the dualism, with *Purakh* as the first term. *Qudret* is an Arabic word, meaning "that under the power and authority of" its Master. *Al-Qadir* as one of the attributes is distinguishable from another attribute of God *al-Khaliq*, i.e. the Creator. In the Quran (57-3), with the contents of which Guru Nanak was familiar, it being part of the high culture of Islamic Asia during Guru Nanak's days of which Islamic Asia Punjab was an integral part in the fifteenth century, God is spoken of as "the First and Last."¹⁸ He is also spoken of as "the Originator of Heavens and Earth." (6-101)¹⁹ Guru Nanak, in his term *qudret*, includes both these Quranic attributes of God, *al-Khaliq* and *al-Qadir*.

He Himself creates and arranges the Nature, He Himself controls its progression and evolution. (*Basant*, I)²⁰

He is the transcendent as well as the immanent and He is also the appearances. He is the Pure Consciousness, and He is also the Creator of the Nature. (*Sri*, I)²¹

The Universal Self has created the individual self and He Himself hath created the differentiating names. Thus Nature hath He created as 'the other' and depositing Himself therein He is in a relation of aesthetic contemplation to Nature. (*Asa*, I)²²

Nature is all that appears and Nature is the World as seen, felt and

appreciated. Nature is all the spaces and Nature is the totality of forms. (Asa, I)²³

Glory to Thee who dwelleth in Nature. Infinite and eternal, Thy limits and frontiers are unknowable. (Asa, I)²⁴

He who has created the world in which He abides as Immanent, that Lord may be recognized through Nature. He is not to be regarded as wholly transcendent, as His voice can be heard in every heart. (Vadhans, I)²⁵

O true Lord, Thy created Nature is real. (Asa, I)²⁶

All that is your *qudret* and you are its *Qadir* and *Karta*, i.e. Absolute Controller and Creator. (Asa, I)²⁷

God creates Nature and single and alone He contemplates it. (Asa, I)²⁸

The question arises but no answer is forthcoming: The purpose, the significance and the value of Nature are beyond man's comprehension. (Gaudi, I)²⁹

The Lord contemplates His own creation, Nature. He contemplates it and he sustains it. Why? He who does, He alone knows. (Vadhans, I)³⁰

It thus becomes clear that Guru Nanak employs the term *qudret* to designate Nature and Cosmos, in the sense of the general cosmic order ordained by God in contrast to human derivations from it. Nature here is the complex of created things, in contradistinction to the Creator-Nature *Naturans* of scholasticism, whereas the created things are *Natura Naturata*. Guru Nanak adopted this word from the common lingual pool of the medieval Indo-Islamic world in which he lived. In Arabic, *qudret*, literally means power, might. The same word *qudret*, as a part of the Turkish language, means power, strength, omnipotence of God, Nature (*Turkish Language Dictionary*, by H. C. Hony, Oxford, 1957). This word *qudret*, as a verbal noun of *qadar* in the Persian language, means power, potency, authority of God, the Creation, Universe, Nature (*Persian-English Dictionary* by Steingass).

It was this word *qudret* which Guru Nanak picked up from the cultural parlance of his contemporary world to which he gave a precise meaning and philosophical exactitude.

The foregoing discussion suggests also the reasons for which Guru Nanak abandoned the term *prakriti*. The term *prakriti* has a permanent odour of absoluteness, existence in its own right, about it and no amount of reinterpretation of the term through the process which Nietzsche called, "transvaluation of values," could possibly have divested it of this inconveniently unpleasant smell. The "Nature," in Guru Nanak, is created by and is utterly dependent on the Creator, at every moment of its existence. The status of Nature in the philosophic scheme of

Guru Nanak is also encompassed within the time-cycle, so that the Quranic status of God, "the First and Last," remains intact.

This concept of Nature is totally different from the concept of *prakriti* which forms the warp of the entire fabric of Indian philosophy. It is strangely akin to the concept of "Nature" held by Meister Eckhart in his *Opus Tripartitum*.

It remains now to conjecture the reasons of Guru Nanak's being at pains to borrow a fundamental term of Sikh philosophy from a source, non-Indo-Sanskrit.

It would appear that the main reasons were three: (1) Primarily, Guru Nanak wanted a term of philosophy to which he could impart such connotation and meanings as would fit in with the base of the religion that he revealed. It is a subject in itself as to what that religion is and how precisely the concept of *qudret* is necessary for its intellectual base and proper practice. (2) Incidentally, Guru Nanak wanted to break the shell of prejudice enclosing the Hindu mind and attitudes towards modes of human communication in languages other than Indo-Sanskrit. There is a severe injunction in the *Bhaviṣya-purāṇa* :

Even if the consequence is death, a true Hindu should refuse to learn the vulgar speech of the Western regions.³¹

This Guru Nanak discountenanced. It was concretized in the broad liberalism of the Tenth Nanak :

All languages of whatever people and whatever region of the earth and all the true sciences, they are proper and acceptable.³²

Last, the Hindu mind was afflicted with a gross bias, for centuries past, symptomatic of dogmatism and mental stagnation. The famous Indologist, Al-Biruni (973-1048), in his *Kitābul-Hind* has recorded :

The Hindus think that there is no science, no knowledge which exists or has originated beyond the frontiers of the sacred land of India.

Guru Nanak aimed at opening the windows of the human mind to all the four quarters of space, so that man's mind may grow freely and his soul may remain whole through healthy contacts with the insights gained by mankind in all countries and in all ages, through such education as trains him to employ his "critical faculty as the anvil and the accumulated wisdom of mankind as the fashioning tool."³³

1. The *Japu* is the pivotal text in the sacred writings of Guru Nanak and the first chapter in the *Guru Granth*, which every Sikh must commit to memory to recite it as the first ritual-prayer at dawn; it is the *hydayasutra* of the Sikh Scripture and in this text the word, *qudrat*, is straightaway introduced:
Qudrati kavan kaha vicaru.
(*Guru Granth*, I, 4)
2. *Man hath budhi ketia kete bed bicar, kete bandhan jia ke gurmukh mokh duar.*
(*Guru Granth*, I, 62)
3. *Ikna nadu na bedu na gia rasu, rasu kasu na jananti,*
Ikna sidhi na budhi na aqali sar, akkhar ka bheo na lahanti,
Nanak te nar asali khar, ji binu gun garabu karanti.
(*Guru Granth*, I, 1411)
4. *Man samjhavan karane kachuak parhiat gian.*
(*Guru Granth*, Kabir, 340)
5. *Paramadhbhutan parkriti pavan.*
(*Guru Granth*, Jaidev, 526)
6. *Tanmatra ... vises as tebhyo myta ... panca pancabhyah.*
7. *Purusartham prati vimocayaty ekarupena.*
8. *Kaivalyam madhyasthyam drastv akar tytra bhavas ca.*
9. *Tasmat tatsamyogad acetanam ceta navad iva lingam*
Gunakartv vai ca karte va bhavati ty udasinah.
10. *Nadanistam az ruz-i-azal in naqsh-i-adam ra, ki naqqash az barae budan-i-khuud khana misazad.*
11. *Trigunam aviveki visayah samanyam acetanam prasavadharmi*
I'yaktam tatha pradhanam tad vipari tas tatha 'ca puman.
12. *Avivekyadih siddhas traigunyat tadviparya ya bhavat.*
13. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, tr: Hazel Barnes, N. Y. Phils: Lib., 1956.
14. *Rangasya darsayitya nivartati nartaki yatha nrtiyat*
Purusasya tathatmanam prakasye nivartate prakrtih
Prakrteh sukumarataram na kincid astiti me matir bhavati
Ya drasta miti punar na darsanam upaiti purusasya.
15. *Likhi likhi parhia teta karia.*
(*Guru Granth*, I, 467)
16. It is found in Rig (X-20) and consists of 16 verses. It is ascribed to Rishi Narayana. In the *Shuklayajur*, *Vajsaneyi-samhita* (XXXI. 1.) it has 22 verses. In the *Taittiriya-aranyaka* of the *Krishnayajur* (III. 2) it has 18 verses. In *Amnya-samhita* of *Samaveda* (IV. 3) and in the *Atharva* (XIX. 3) also it is there.
17. *Ikoankar satinamu karta purkhu nirbhau niroairu akalimurti ajuni saibhan gurprasadi.*
(*Guru Granth*, I, 1)
18. *Huv-al-awwal wal akhiru.*
19. *Badi al-samawat wal-arz.*
20. *Ape qudrati kare saji, sacu api nibere raju¹ raji.*
(*Guru Granth*, I, 1170)
21. *Ape nerai duri ape hi ape manjhi miano,*
Ape vekhaj sune ape hi qudrati kare jahano.
(*Guru Granth*, I, 25)
22. *Apinai apu sajio apinai racio nau,*
Duyi qudrati sajia kari avanu ditho cau.
(*Guru Granth*, I, 463)

23. *Qudrati disai qudrati suniai qudrati bhau sukh saru,
Qudrati patali akasi qudrati sarab akaru.*
(Guru Granth, I, 464)
24. *Balihari qudrati vassia tera antu na jai lakhia.*
(Guru Granth, I, 469)
25. *Jini jagu siraji samaia so sahibu qudrati janova,
Sakra duri na bhaliai ghati ghati sabadu pachanova.*
(Guru Granth, I, 581)
26. *Sacci teri qudrati sacce patisah.*
(Guru Granth, I, 463)
27. *Sabh teri qudrati tun qadiru karta. . .*
(Guru Granth, I, 464)
28. *Ape qudrati sajikai ape kare bicaru.*
(Guru Granth, I, 143)
29. *Kahna hai kichu kahanu na jai,
Tau qudrati qimati nahi pai.*
(Guru Granth, I, 152)
30. *Kita vekhai sahibu apna qudrati kare bicaro,
Qudrati bicare dharan dhare jini kia so jane.*
(Guru Granth, I, 580)
31. *Na paret yawani bhasha paran karan gaterapi.*
32. *Sabhai lokbhasha sabhai deshbani
Sabhai shastra bidia samasto pardhani.*
33. *Ahrani mati vedu hathiaru.*
(Guru Granth, I, 8)

VII

THE CONCEPT OF SAHAJ IN GURU NANAK'S THEOLOGY — ITS ANTECEDENTS

NIHARRANJAN RAY

All knowledgeable Sikhs and students of Sikhism recognize that the ultimate goal which the religious and spiritual discipline laid down by Guru Nanak was supposed to lead to was the experience of *sahaj*.¹ *Sahaj*, according to him, was indeed the last reach of human experience, beyond which lay the realm of formlessness, of inarticulation.

What is this *sahaj* experience? What is its nature or character? How does one achieve it? How does one recognize it?

In common with Kabir and many other *sants* of medieval India, Guru Nanak came to recognize and accept that the religious and spiritual quest was a matter which was altogether internal to man. Negatively speaking, it was not a matter of external practices and observances of traditional forms and prescriptions of religion. Positively, it was a matter, first, of cleansing and purifying one's heart and mind; second, of filling them with an intense love and devotion for God, the Ultimate and the Absolute, and waiting cravingly for His grace (*kirpa*, *prasad*, *bakhsis*, *daya*, *bhana*, *karam*, etc.), and, third, seeking unceasingly a complete, unalloyed and absolute blending of one's individual self or *atman* with the Universal Self or *Paramatman* who is none other than God Himself. For each one of these stages Guru Nanak laid down certain disciplines that each individual aspirant was called upon to go through to prepare himself for the final merger or blending. An analysis of these disciplines seems to indicate that what Guru Nanak was aiming at was a transformation of the individual psyche and will by bending and directing both towards the ultimate goal of achieving the merger into the Ultimate Absolute. It was only when the soil of life was made ready that the final ascent could be made. This ascent, too, was in several *khands* or stages in spiritual progress, as Guru Nanak described them; they were five in number, namely, *Dharam Khand*, *Gian Khand*, *Saram Khand*,² *Karam Khand* and *Sach Khand*. For the purpose of this paper, it is not necessary to go into an explanation and analysis of these *khands*; it would be enough to indicate that neither God's grace nor the merger into Him was any matter of accident, happening as if in a sudden flash. To reach up to the ultimate state of *sahaj* or absolute union, merger or blending, one had to prepare oneself

through a rigorous process of *sadhana* or discipline and proceed stage by stage.

How does one recognize that one has reached the state of *sahaj*? What is the nature or character of *sahaj* experience?

Sach Khand, the last of the five *khands* or stages is the realm of Truth, the ultimate stage of human aspiration and experience in which one reaches a state of absolute merger into the Absolute, a state which is beyond words, and can only be experienced. It is beyond the three *gunas*³ — *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* — and is hence called the *chautha pad* — the fourth state. It is also called the *turia pad* or *turia avastha*,⁴ that is, the supreme state, the *param pad*,⁵ the absolute state, the *amara pad*⁶ — the deathless state. It is a state of absolute peace and tranquillity,⁷ of changelessness, since it lies beyond the cycle of birth and death⁸ and, of eternal wonder and bliss;⁹ it is also a state of ineffable glory and light radiating beyond the *dasam duar*¹⁰ or the tenth door. The *sahaj* or merger is like the merger of the light of the individual into the light of God,¹¹ like the mingling of a drop of water with the ocean.¹² It is a state of existence in which the *atma* of the individual is dissolved or absorbed in the *Paramatma*, and the inner duality dies within.¹³ Indeed, the *sahaj* state is not merely the Ultimate Reality, it is the Lord (*Prabhu*), the ultimate indwelling Beloved in whom one is merged or absorbed.¹⁴

The word by which this absorption or blending or merger is characterized is a very significant one; it is either *samati* or *samauna* as in *sahaji samati*,¹⁵ *sahaji samauna*, *joti-joti samauna*,¹⁶ *sabadi samauna*, *sachi samauna*; for instance, the root verb in each case being *sam* which literally means to equalize, merge, blend, absorb, fill, pervade, unify; but from the context in which the word *samati* or *samauna* is used, it is all but clear that what is meant is absolute absorption, unification, merger or blending in a manner so as to leave no trace or consciousness of duality or separate identity.

Apart from the characteristics of peace and tranquillity, of wonderment and bliss and of ineffable radiance by which one recognizes the *sahaj* state of being, Guru Nanak recognized another, that of *anahad sabad*,¹⁷ an unstruck sound which he used to experience within himself at that ultimate state of being.

In whichever manner one seeks to describe the *sahaj*-experience, its real nature must elude understanding in humanly communicable language. The articulation of an experience which was essentially a mystical one and, hence, according to Guru Nanak himself, was incapable of being translated into communicable terms, was indeed beyond human expression, had necessarily to be in traditional mystical terms made current and somewhat understandable by his predecessors, belonging to various mystical orders of the *sants* and *sadhus*, and in those of symbols and images that had some meaning, howsoever vague and generalized, to those to whom these were addressed.

What I have just essayed to do is to present, as faithfully and clearly as possible, the nature and character of *sahaj*, as articulated by Guru Nanak himself at different places of his enormous corpus of *sabads*, or *dohas* and *slokas*. Yet it must be recognized that, in the ultimate analysis, the essential nature of the experience lay in the actual absorption or union itself by one who experienced it in the lineaments of his being. That Guru Nanak was convinced that one did so by his senses and the mind, all physical entities, there is no scope for doubt. He is very clear, precise and definite when he says: "This body is the abode of God, His palace wherein He shines in infinite radiance. By the Guru's word one is ushered into that palace. There alone one comes face to face with God."¹⁸

Was Guru Nanak absolutely original in what he said about *sahaj*, its nature and character? Were the terms and concepts like *sahaj*, *anahad sabad*, *samati* and *samauna*, and the nature of the description of the experience of *sahaj* entirely his own? If not, where did he get them from? Did he accept and adopt whatever he received from his inheritance? If he did not, wherein did he differ and how did he state his position, in the light of his own personal experience, without doubt?

An attempt may be made afresh¹⁹ to answer these questions, as briefly and as precisely as possible. There are many points of similarity and difference and divergence between Guru Nanak, on the one hand, and the totality of the Indian medieval protestant and non-conformist mystic tradition and the individual mystics belonging to this tradition, on the other. Basically and in all fundamental matters, these individuals and the orders they represented, beginning from about the ninth and tenth to about the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Christian era, belonged to the same tradition and subscribed to the same attitudes and approaches towards religious and spiritual life, in general, and Brahmanical Hinduism, traditional Buddhism and Jainism and Indian Islam, in particular, especially in regard to the behavioural pattern of the followers of the respective cults and faiths. But for the purpose of this paper, I shall confine myself to one concept alone, that of *sahaj*, and its nature and character, of the Indian medieval mystics, considered individually and collectively, and try to find out answers to the questions I have put to myself in respect of this one particular concept.

II

Insofar as the concept of *sahaj* is concerned, it would be enough if we turn to Kabir and the *Nathapanthi* yogis, in the first instance, and in the second, to the *Sahajayani* Buddhists and their spiritual descendants, the *Sahajiya* Vaishnavas and Bauls of Bengal, since all those sects and cults came to accept *sahaja* as the Ultimate and Absolute Reality. The Sufi saints did not accept the term, but they too conceived the Ultimate Reality

in terms of the Supreme Beloved just as Kabir and Dadu, even Guru Nanak, and the *Sahajiya* Vaishnavas and Bauls of Bengal and other devotional sects and cults did under the impact of the Bhakti movement. The *sants* and *sadhus* of northern India seem to have had already achieved a kind of synthesis between the *Sahaja* and Sufi ideas when Guru Nanak appeared on the scene of medieval Indian religious thought and activities. Many of the medieval *sants* and *sadhus*, identified the Supreme Beloved who was none other than *sahaj* itself with Rama or Krishna with whom they sought a personal relation of intense love. But it must be pointed out at once that the *sants* and *sadhus*, including Kabir and Guru Nanak, were never tired of asserting that Rama or Krishna was not any historical or even a mythological person, not any incarnation of God; indeed, he had no anthropomorphic form whatsoever. As a matter of fact, they conceived their Rama or Krishna as an indwelling principle which was the ultimate, formless, colourless reality immanent in man; it was none other than God Himself. *Sahaj*-experience was, indeed, with them God-experience itself.

Kabir characterizes the experience of *sahaj* as the ultimate human experience, an experience of bliss and peace; he calls it *sahaj samadhi* which one can attain by finally arresting all the functions of the mind and, hence, creating an absolute vacuity within. He, therefore, characterizes *sahaj* as *sunī (sunya) sahaj* which he describes as a state of supreme peace and bliss, or *mahasukha*. It was a state of absolute merger in which there was left no trace of duality. What is significant is that the term for merger or blending or union that Kabir uses is *samana*, which is *samauna* in Guru Nanak.²⁰ Speaking of *sahaj*, Kabir says: "Everybody speaks of *sahaj*, but nobody knows what *sahaj* really is. *Sahaj* really is when one gives up all his desires, keeps his senses under his full control, when his son, wife, wealth and desire are all kept aside and when Kabir becomes the maid of Rama; that is real *sahaj* when one is united with Rama, that is, with the Lord in a natural manner."²¹

It is to be noted in this connection that when Kabir speaks in terms of merger of himself as the maid of Rama into his only beloved Rama Himself, he is not thinking in terms of physical union of the two physical sexes, though the imagery is one of such a union. All that he meant was the union of two principles: the individual self and the Universal Self, both innate and immanent in man's very nature, the reason for the union to be called *sahaj*, a term which literally meant what originated with the birth of any entity (*sahaja jayate iti sahaja*).

Dadu, a spiritual successor of Kabir, one of the frontrank *sants* and perhaps a younger contemporary of Guru Nanak, speaks of *sahaj* in the same strain and characterizes it more clearly and emphatically. He, too, says that this was the ultimate end of all religious and spiritual quests. He, too, asserts that *sahaj* which is *sunya* or vacuity is the Ultimate Reality. *Sahaj* is the Supreme Beloved, the Lord or *sami* (Sans. *svami*),

or Rama who is none other than the formless non-dual God into whom one seeks absolute merger through intense love and devotion. This state of union or blending or merger is the state of *sahaj*-experience. "When consciousness reaches the *sahaj* state," says Dadu, "waves of duality vanish; what is hot and what is cold become the same, everything becomes one." Elsewhere he says: "Where there are no two, there is *sahaj*; there joy and sorrow become one. *Sahaj* neither lives nor dies; it is the state of complete *nirvana*... Amidst all duality hold your consciousness in the vacuity of *sahaj*, and drink nectar when you have attained the final state of rest, and then there is no fear of death or of the flux of time." In a number of *dohas*, Dadu goes on speaking endlessly as if it were of the nature and character of *sahaj*, more or less on the same lines as Kabir does, using more or less the same images and symbols. "One's self is a tender plant wherein blooms the flower of *sahaj*; the true guru teaches how to achieve it in a natural way, but very rare are the persons who can understand it." Elsewhere he says: "*Prana* and *pyanda* (the vital breath and the body), flesh and blood, ears and nose, all play wonderful sport in *sahaj*."²²

Did Kabir and Dadu, as a matter of fact, the *sants* of the *Nirguna Sampradaya*, speak of any yogic practices as helpful and necessary for reaching the state of *sahaj*? It is not absolutely clear that they did. Indeed, an analysis of the *dohas* of Kabir does not show very clearly if he had a regular system of physiological and psychological discipline, or *yoga*, which involved the hundred-petalled lotus, the *shat-chakra*, the control of the vital wind and the nervous system in connection with which he speaks of two channels referred to as the moon and the sun, or the Ganga and the Yamuna, and a third, the three together forming what was called the Triveni. The Triveni was the middle channel or nerve that led to *sahaj*. To all of these, Kabir refers nevertheless. He also refers to the drinking of nectar issuing from the nerve called the moon and located on Mount Meru or the spinal chord.²³ Kabir called his system *sahaj yoga* and *sahaj*-experience, *sahaj samadhi*, but as one looks closely into the system and the context of the terms and symbols he uses to describe it, one does not feel absolutely convinced that Kabir had come to accept the yogic tradition of Tantric *Hathayoga* made current by the *Sahajayani* Buddhists and the *Nathapanthis*, for instance. Recent researches²⁴ have tried to prove that leading *sants* of the *Nirguna* school did all come to accept what is usually known as the Tantric yogic practices as an essential part of their religious and spiritual discipline, their imagination and intellect. Indeed a comparative study of terms, phrases, imageries and symbols and even of the language itself of the *sants* and *sadhus* of the medieval period show a remarkable similarity among them, on the one hand, and between the *Sahajayani* Buddhists and the *Nathapanthis*, for instance, on the other.²⁵ In fact, some of the *dohas* of Kabir and Dadu read almost as translations or transcreations of the *padas* and

dohas of the Buddhist *Siddhacharyas*. Even so, I am not absolutely certain that the Tantric yogic terms, concepts and phrases used by Kabir and Dadu, for instance, were anything more than images and symbols, figures of speech, so to say, made use of since they had a symbolical meaning understood well by those to whom these words were addressed. But in this paper, I should not be dealing with Kabir or Dadu, but with Guru Nanak.

III

There were many elements in the *sant* tradition, in a number of other protestant and non-conformist sects and in Guru Nanak which were common to the *Nathapanthis* and their predecessors, the *Sahajayani* Buddhists. It is perhaps necessary to mention them here since, to my mind, they were the pre-conditions of *sahaj*-experience, that is, these elements constituted the stages of preparation and of the psychological climate which led to the experience of that state of peace and bliss, happiness and radiance which was called *sahaj*. Negatively speaking, these were: (a) a sharp criticism and rejection of all external formalities in regard to religious practices and spiritual quests, and (b) a protest against and rejection of priestly and scriptural authority, celibacy, penances, austerities, and the like. Positively, the most important elements were: (a) the recognition of a guru as essential for any spiritual exercise and quest, (b) the recognition of the human person as the seat and habitat of all religious and spiritual experience, indeed of the Truth or Ultimate Reality and, hence, the rejection of any transcendental reality external to man, and finally, (c) the recognition of the experience of the Ultimate Reality as one of inexpressible happiness and ineffable radiance, waveless equipoise, absolute peace and tranquillity, and of absolute non-duality or complete unity. The *Sahajayani* Buddhists, the saintly poets of the *sant* tradition, Kabir and Guru Nanak knew this experience of the Ultimate Reality as *sahaj*; indeed, the *sants* and Guru Nanak seemed to have received the term and concept as an inheritance from the *Sahajayani* Buddhists who, in their turn, seem to have received not the term but the concept of the resolution of the duality through an absolute union of two principles, one male and the other female, as well as the nature and character of the ultimate experience, from the older, *Mahayana-Vajrayana* Buddhist tradition.²⁶ The *Sahajayanis* know this experience also as *mahasukha*.

The *Nathapanthis*, however, did neither accept the term, nor the concept in its entirety, though the description of the nature and character of the ultimate experience reads more or less the same. Yet the fact remains that there are yogic terms and concepts in the *Nathapanthi* tradition that were accepted and adopted by the *sants* like Kabir and Dadu as well as by Guru Nanak. This tradition, therefore, deserves a certain consideration.

Judging by the regional literatures on the *Nathasiddha* yogis and the variety of myths and legends connected with them, it would seem that the *Natha* movement was at least a pan-north Indian one, and, if Matsyendra-natha is regarded as one of the originators of the cult, its antiquity must be at least as old as that of *Sahajayana*. Apart from a general predilection for occult practices and acquisition of supernatural powers, the *Nathasiddhas* owed their religious affiliation to the *Siva-Sakti* cult, but their religious discipline was that of *Natha-Yoga*, which was almost an article of faith with them. Yogic practices, somewhat of the nature and character of those of *Nathayogis*, were common to the *Sahajayani* Buddhists and other esoteric cults and sects, but with the *Nathayogis* this was the most important means of achieving their goal, whereas with the others they constituted only one of the disciplines. With the former, it was altogether physiological, whereas with the latter it was also a psychological discipline.

Besides, the greatest and most important difference lay in the ultimate goal itself. The ultimate objective with the *Sahajayani* Buddhists, the *sants* like Kabir and Dadu, and with Guru Nanak, was the achievement of *sahaj*-experience which the *Sahajayanis* identified with *mahasukha*, but the *Nathayogi* objective was to attain the state of *jivanmukti*, or immortality in life.

How did they propose to achieve this end? Bereft of esoteric complexities and scholastic niceties, as recorded in relevant texts,²⁷ their postulation may be stated, for our present purpose, as follows.

This ordinary human body is a raw, indeed, a very imperfect, a most inadequate object for the achievement of *jivanmukti*, that is, freedom from bondage of decay and death, in other words, of immortality. But through the yogic processes of *ultra-sadhana*, that is, by making the vital fluid flow upwards instead of downwards which is the natural physical law, and of *kaya-sadhana*, that is, by the disciplining of the muscles, sinews, ducts, nerves and nerve-centres as well as of the mind through a perfect control of the vital wind, this raw, imperfect body can be transformed first into a *pakkva deha*, or ripe body, and then transubstantiated steadily into a *divya deha*, or divine body, which was the only way to overcome decay, destruction and death. This disciplining of the body and the mind involved a detailed classification and analysis of the entire human physiological system so well known in *Hathayoga*; it also involved, according to *Nathayogic* interpretation, a number of theoretical postulates and actual physiological processes which have all been studied, analysed and described in some detail by competent scholars.²⁸ For our purpose, I need not go into any of these very intricate details, except for pointing out that the conception of the sun and the moon identified, respectively, with *Sakti* and *Siva*, on the one hand, and with woman and man, on the other, had an important role to play on the yogic scheme of things of the *Nathayogis*. The sun and the moon were usually understood to stand,

respectively, for the right and left nerve channels and their union as the union of the two channels of the vital wind. The sun is also supposed to stand for fire or heat or *agni* and the moon for *soma-rasa*, the nectar essence, the former being the consumer of the latter, the two in their balanced combination constituting the principle that was supposed to sustain physical existence, the one that is the moon standing for creation and preservation, and the other, the sun, for decay and destruction. The moon was, therefore, supposed to stand for Siva and the sun for Sakti; also, therefore, for man and woman. The moon being the source of creation and preservation (Siva-man), it was supposed to hold in its bosom the *amrita* or nectar which was otherwise called *maharasa* (or *bindu*, the vital secretion) which the sun (Sakti-woman) was always seeking to consume. The Nathayogic aim was to save this *amrita* from being consumed by the sun; their method of doing so was by a particular *mudra* in their yogic practice which involved the conception of the *dasam duar*, or the body which was distinguished from the other ordinary doors. Since the sun was equated with Sakti (woman) who was always eager to consume the *amrita* (*bindu*) of the moon, the *Nathayogis* tried to keep away from women as far as possible, indeed, to shun them altogether, though they, in some of their yogic practices, had to use them, but as mere instruments.

The attitude of the *sants* like Kabir towards women was certainly derived from and conditioned by that of the *Nathayogis*. Kabir refers to women as tigresses, always seeking men to prey upon to suck their vitality out of them. The general attitude of the other *sants* was not different.

IV

It is exactly here, that is, in their attitude towards women, that the *Sahajayani* Buddhists differed most from the *Nathayogis*. They also differed in the ultimate objective of their spiritual question and in the general approach to it, although the practical *yoga* discipline followed by the *Sahajayanis* was not materially distinct from that of the *Nathapanthis*.

The *Sahajayani* objective was not immortality in any physical sense but, frankly, the peaceful, blissful, radiant, changeless and, hence, waveless experience of *sahaja* which was one and the same as *mahasukha*, the great happiness. By its very nature, *sahaja*-experience was indescribable; it was essentially non-dual in character and was, in their interpretation, the Ultimate Reality.

How does one achieve this *sahaja* objective? *Sahajayanis*, in common with all other contemporary protestant Tantric yogic cults and sects, considered the human body itself the seat of all human experience, including that of *sahaja mahasukha*. According to them, everything lay within this human frame, nothing outside of it, and that this human body was not the miniature, or microcosm of the macrocosm. It was, therefore, in the nature of things that their religious attitude and practice of the

body, that is, the physical system, which was generally a common knowledge among all Tantrics, received great attention from them. The six nerve plexuses or *shat-chakra* of yogic texts was reduced by them to three and identified with the three *kayas* of Mahayana Buddhism, namely, the *Nirmana kaya*, the *Dharma kaya* and the *Sambhoga kaya*, with a fourth, called *Vajra* or *Sahaja kaya*, located in the *ushnisha-kamala* (the *sahasrara* of Hindu Tantra), known as the *mahasukha-kamala* or *mahasukhachakra*. *Sunyata* and *Karuna*, otherwise known as *Prajna* and *Upaya*, were identified with the two nerve channels on the two sides of the spinal chord, the third channel which was the meeting channel of the other two being the most important, since it was supposed to lead to *sahaja* and was called *Avadhuti marga*, or *Avadhutika*. The union or blending of *Sunyata* and *Karuna*, or, in other words, of *Prajna* and *Upaya*, which together constituted the *Bodhicitta*, in the third channel, the *Avadhutika*, meant that the *Bodhicitta* was supposed to raise upwards to the *ushnisha-kamala*.²⁹ But this esoteric yogic practice was not merely physiological in character; it was also supposed to have a strong psychological undertone, the union of *Sunyata* and *Karuna*, imagined as and identified with the female and the male principles, respectively, being one surcharged with emotion.

Indeed, the identification of *Sunyata* with the female and *Karuna* with the male principle transformed the character of the physical discipline of *yoga* within the individual human body into a kind of *sexo-yogic* practice, thus introducing an external element into it in the shape and form of a woman. The image and practice of *mithuna*, thus, became an important element in the yogic practices of the *Sahajayani* Buddhists, an element which was not accepted and adopted by the *Nathayogis*. Woman, therefore, came to occupy a significant place in *Sahajayana*; indeed, in the literature of the particular *yana* she is idolized and idealized.

The nature of the union or blending is, however, described as having no trace whatsoever left of any external element, of duality in any sense; indeed, it was characterized as *samarasa*, a state of non-dual unity, which is the same as Kabir's and Dadu's conception of the state, and as Guru Nanak's *samauna*. According to the *Sahajayani* conception, the achievement of the state was indicated by an *anahata dhavani* or *sabad*, an unstruck sound that preceded it. The sound was supposed to be produced at the moment when the flow of the right and left nerve channels — *Sunyata* and *Karuna* or *Prajna* and *Upaya* — were controlled and made to flow into the third or middle one, the *Avadhutika*, thus enabling the *Bodhicitta* to rise upwards to the *ushnisha-kamala* or the *mahasukha-kamala*.³⁰

V

The *sabads* of Guru Nanak, in the *Guru Granth*, do not lend themselves

to the reconstruction of the details of the kind of yogic practice that the disciples had to follow. From his use of such technical terms as *sahaja*, *dasam duar*, *samana* or *samauna*, *amrit*, *anahad sabad*, etc., one would tend to think that the Guru must have accepted and adopted some kind or other of the yogic practices of the *Sahajayanis*, the *Nathapanthis* and the like, particularly in view of the fact that his immediate predecessor in the *sant* line, Kabir, also used some of these technical terms in his *dohas* in connection with his way of religious and spiritual pursuit.

Personally, I cannot agree to such a view. It is perfectly true to say that both Kabir and Guru Nanak not only used the term *sahaj*, but also spoke of the nature and character of the experience in more or less the same terms and images as the *Sahajayani* Buddhists did. It is also true that both of them shared the general Tantric view of the importance of the human body as the seat and habitat of all religious and spiritual experiences and that all such experiences lay within and not outside. Both of them also use terms like *amrita* in the sense of nectar or immortality, and *samarasa* or *samana* and *samauna* which means the same thing, that is, experience of absolute union and blending, and *anahad sabad*, or *dhavani*, in the sense of unstruck sound.

Kabir goes further even when he uses the imageries of the Ganga and the Yamuna to mean the right and left nerve channels, the Triveni to mean the middle channel and the *satadal* or the hundred-petalled lotus, the sun, the moon, etc., and expresses his intense dislike of women. That he borrowed these words, phrases and images and his dislike of women from the Tantric yogic tradition, more particularly from the *Nathayogis*, could hardly be doubted. Guru Nanak does not, however, seem to be using these words, phrases and images nor has he inherited the intense dislike of women of the *Nathayogis* and of Kabir.

Yet, the question remains even in respect of Kabir as to what extent these borrowings were just echoes of a tradition, just the use of words, phrases and images that had more or less common currency among the heterodox, protestant and non-conformist mystic cults and sects, a sort of language that was understood by them, without any actual relationship with any kind of Tantric yogic practice. But from the closeness of Kabir, Dadu and a number of others belonging to the *sant* tradition insofar as their terms and concepts, images and symbols are concerned, one may, for argument's sake, concede that they had adopted some kind of Tantric yogic practices, perhaps of the *Nathayogi* tradition.

That it was *not* so at least in respect of Guru Nanak has been the impression left on me by the records left by the Guru himself, that is, by his own words.

Let me take the words and phrases, images and symbols used by the Guru, one by one, in their respective and relevant contexts.

Guru Nanak uses the term *amrit*, as I have already pointed out, in the sense of nectar of immortality, but nowhere do I find him using the term

in the sense of *bindu* or *maharasa* (the semen virile), that is, the vital secretion of which the moon happens to be the receptacle. Indeed, Guru Nanak does not seem to have used the images of the sun and the moon anywhere in connection with *amrit*. Rather, to my knowledge, the use of the term is found in association with the *Nam*, the name of God, His name being the Truth. "Whatever God has made is the manifestation of His *Nam*," says the Guru. "There is nothing in creation which is not such a manifestation."³¹ This *Nam* is veritably the *amrit* (*namamrita*), the nectar of immortality, and it is in this sense and in this context that the word *amrit* is more often than not used. Nowhere do I find any yogic meaning of the term.

The term *samana* or *samauna* is, etymologically speaking, certainly related to the *sama* or *samarasa* of the *Sahajayani* Buddhists. But it is significant that *samana* or *samauna* is never associated with *rasa*, that is, essence or juice. This term one finds used in such contexts or associations as in *sahaji samauna*, *sabadi samauna*, *sachi samauna*, *avigati samauna*, *joti-joti samauna*,³² etc. In all these contexts and associations, the clear and simple meaning of the term *samauna* is "union" or "blending" which is qualified or associated with such words as *sahaji*, *sabadi*, *sachi*, *avigati* and *joti-joti* for no other reason than to articulate the nature and character of the union or blending. Nowhere does one find in this word and its image any yogic association or significance.

Much more significant are the two terms and phrases *anahad sabad* and *dasam duar*, both being technical in their use and traditional association with esoteric yogic practices. Guru Nanak seems to have derived both the components from the *Nathayogis* and Kabir, but he seems to differ with both in regard to their meaning and use. Kabir uses the term *sabad* (literally, sound) by itself in the sense of the Word of God, just as Guru Nanak does at a later date, but when Kabir uses the term in association with *anahad* as in *anahad sabad*, he does so, much as the *Nathayogis* did, though in his utterances it is by no means absolutely clear if it had any yogic significance.

That in Guru Nanak's case the phrase had no Tantric or esoteric yogic significance whatsoever is more than clear. Let me quote a significant passage from the Guru wherein the component *anahad sabad* (unstruck sound) has been used.

Throwing one's doubts aside when one meets the Guru (= God).
 One can experience one's inner being.
 Prepare yourself even when you are alive
 For the place where you are destined to go when you die . . .
 Through meditation on the Guru one hears the melodious *anahad sabad*.
 When one hears it,
 One's *haumai* (ego or self) is destroyed . . .³³

Wherever the phrase occurs, it is always in such contexts that it does, especially so when the Guru is addressing his words to the Tantric yogis,

as if he were giving altogether a new twist or interpretation to the component by using one with which they were so familiar. In all such passages, *anahad sabad* is just a phrase which was being used not to indicate any yogic experience, but one which could not be articulated in communicable language, which, in other words, was inexpressible except in mystical, but otherwise well-known, phrases and images. In any case, in whatever context the component occurs, one does not seem to find any indication of any yogic association.

The same holds good in respect of the component *dasam duar*, the tenth door, one which occurs in a number of places.³⁴ But in each particular case, all that the phrase signifies is that it is tenth or last door to cross before one can attain to the state of *sahaj*-experience, the door having no yogic significance. The component, which is admittedly a yogic one, seems to have been used by the Guru more as an image, a symbol which had a meaning for those to whom his words were being addressed. Indeed, all such yogic technical terms and concepts that Guru Nanak makes use of, including that of *sahaj*, seem to have been, for him at any rate, nothing more than just a convenient means of communicating an idea of a mystical experience which was otherwise incommunicable. Terms and concepts like *anahad sabad* and *dasam duar* or even *sahaj* as Guru Nanak makes use of, or the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Triveni, the sun and the moon, the hundred-petalled lotus, etc., as Kabir uses them were admittedly of earlier yogic origin and association, but with the *sants* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and perhaps with the Auls and Bauls of contemporary and later days (not with the *Sahajiya* Vaishnavas), these terms and concepts had become nothing more than figures of speech. With the potency and meaning of powerful images and symbols, but without any active association with the yogic practices of either the *Sahajyanis* or the *Nathayogis* or any other Tantric cult and sect. Rabindranath Tagore in the twentieth century made use of many of these images, symbols and figures of speech; it would be idle to speculate that he was a practitioner of *Hathayoga*.

Reading closely through the utterances of Guru Nanak, as compiled in the *Guru Granth*, I do not find anywhere any evidence of his being a practitioner of *Hathayoga* or any other kind of *Tantricyoga*, nor does he seem to have prescribed for his followers any such practices. Yet he was certainly a yogi in the best and most perfect sense of the term, but his yoga or discipline was not a physiological one in the Tantricyogic sense; it lay altogether in the disciplining of the mind and the senses through their concentration in meditation directed towards God, the Ultimate Reality. Indeed, he seems to have laid down a systematic process for the purpose.

Basic in this discipline is the conquest of the mind: "Conquering the mind is the conquest of the world" says the Guru.³⁵ The preparation for this conquest lies along the path of meditation or concentration on God,

and the destruction or effacement of *haumai*, that is, of the self or ego. God reveals Himself: indeed, He is the *Sabad* or the *Word*; He is the *Nam* or the *Name*, the *Guru*, the *Hukam* or the Divine Order, the *Sach*, the Truth. It is these and Unity that one must concentrate and meditate upon. God-experience is an inner experience; one must, therefore, cleanse and purify one's inner being. How does one do it? Guru Nanak's clear answer is: By loving devotion for and adoration of God,³⁶ and by endless repetition and remembering of His Name (*Nam-simaran*).³⁷ Filled by love for Him, saturated by His Name, enveloped by Him, one reaches the state of *vismad*, of awe and wonder at the vision of the greatness of God.³⁸ Then begins the ascent towards the Ultimate Reality through the five *khands* or stages, stage by stage until one reaches the *sahaj* state of mystic experience which is the Ultimate Reality Itself.³⁹

Here, there is nowhere the slightest trace of any kind of Tantricyogic practices. What is here inculcated is a religious and spiritual discipline or yoga of the simplest and yet the most difficult kind, a discipline of self-purification, of love and devotion, of concentration and meditation on God, the One and the only Ultimate Reality, without a second.

By laying down this discipline and this objective, Guru Nanak saved the Indian world of medieval societies and religions from decay and disintegration and gave back to that world a much purer form of religious and spiritual quest. The leaders of the Bhakti movement and men like Kabir, the greatest spokesman of the *sant* synthesis, also tried to do the same and succeeded in doing so to a very great extent. But the former by bringing in the theory and concept of *avatara* or incarnation of the Supreme Reality and those of Radha, and, hence, elements external to man, compromised the transparent and undiluted unitariness of God. The latter, that is, Kabir followed the *Nathayogi* tradition and inheritance so closely as to cloud and mystify his vision of the Supreme Reality which never comes out clearly, vividly and unequivocally from his utterances. Guru Nanak's position and statements are precise, clear and unequivocal and their ethical import and socio-religious significance deep and wide.

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4. *Gauri* 12, p. 154; *Asa* 22, p. 356.
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6. *Tilang* 1, p. 725.
7. *Tukhari Chhant* 2, p. 1110; *Tilang* 1, p. 725; *Gauri* 10, p. 154; *Sarang* 2, p. 1197; *Suhi Ashtapadi* 2, p. 751; *Suhi Chhant* 5, p. 766; *Asa Ashtapadi* 7, p. 414; *Maru Sabda* 20, p. 1040.
8. *Tukhari Chhant* 2, p. 1110; *Suhi* 4, p. 729.
9. *Maru Solha* 15, p. 1036; *Malar* 5, p. 1256.

10. *Gauri Ashtapadi* 15, p. 227 ; *Ramakali Ashtapadi* 3, pp. 903-4 ; *Maru Solah* 13, 16, 19, 20, pp. 1033-40.
11. *Tukhari Chhant* 5, p. 1112.
12. *Sri Rag* 22, p. 22.
13. *Dhanasari* 4, p. 661.
14. *Jakai antar basai prabhu api Nanak te jan sahaji samati—Anthology of Nanak's Poems*, ed. by Pritam Singh, Amritsar, p. 367.
15. See 14 above.
16. *Tukhari Chhant* 5, p. 1112.
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20. *Kabir Granthavali* (Hindi), ed. by Syamsundar Das, Nagri Pracharini Granth-mala, pp. 89, 109, 111, 137, 138, 159, 199, 269, 316, 318.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.
22. *Dadu* (Bengali) ed. by Kshitimohan Sen, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, pp. 259, 313, 347, 382-84, 416, 422, 459, 461, 484, 596.
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25. Dasgupta, Sasibhushan, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Second edn., 360-66.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-50.
27. *Ibid.* Chapters VIII and IX where all these texts and the yogic system of the *Nathayogis* have been fully analysed and explained.
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29. Dasgupta, Sasibhushan, *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 77-86 and Chapter IV, pp. 87-109.
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32. See 15 and 16.
33. *Sri Rag* 18, p. 21.
34. *Maru Solha* 13(1), 16(2), 19(4), 20(2), pp. 1033-40 ; *Gauri Asht.* 15, p. 227 ; *Ramakali Asht.* 3, pp. 903-4.
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VIII

THE CONCEPT OF MAYA IN GURU NANAK'S PHILOSOPHY

BUDDHA PRAKASH

Indian philosophy is generally considered otherworldly and supramundane, dismissing the material nature as a delusion and rejecting its objects as fantasies. In support of this view, besides other arguments, the concept of *maya* is usually cited and, on the basis of it, it is held that an Indian aims at escaping from the material world to a realm of abstraction and extinction. This term, *maya*, is taken to mean illusion, unreality, deception, fraud, trick, sorcery, witchcraft, magic, etc.,¹ and is understood in the sense of "magical power such as the power of deity or demon to change shape or to create illusory effects by supernatural means."² As the way of the creation and behaviour of the world, it is meant to imply a phantasmagoria, having no more reality than a dream or hallucination. It is held that "nothing in life is dependable, and whatever overtakes us in this world, whether good or bad, cannot be explained with reference to a purposive mind behind the world process."³ That this view is erroneous will be clear from the following discussion of the connotation of this term with special reference to the philosophy of Guru Nanak.

T. Burrow derives the word *maya* from the Indo-European root *ma* meaning "to make." From it, according to him, have also come the Latin word *mater* (mother) and *materies* (material). Thus *maya* and *material* have an etymological as well as a semantic affinity with each other.⁴ J. Gonda observes that "of all etymologies, proposed for this term, the connection with the root *ma* denoting such ideas as "creative thinking, devising" is less questionable than other solutions of this vexed problem."⁵ Etymological speculation apart, the term *maya* has been used in the sense of making, creating and devising right from the Vedic period. In the *Rigveda*, in the words of Gonda, "It suggests the conception of a special ability, ascribed to a god, to project himself into externality, to assume an outward appearance or to appear in, or as, the phenomenal world."⁶ Since, according to the Vedic view, creation is the expression, extension and manifestation of the Creator, *maya* means the process, faculty and *modus operandi*, whereby He assumes the forms of various external objects and inheres in them.⁷ In the Upanisads, *maya* becomes synonymous with *prakriti* or nature which is said to be the result of the *Saktiyoga* of the Supreme Being.⁸ In the *Brahmasutra* of

Badarayana, which is a systematization of Upanisadic thought, it is clearly laid down that "Brahman is also Prakriti," which implies an integration of spirit and matter and establishes the reality of the world.⁹ In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which represents another synthesis of ancient Indian thought, it is emphatically stated that the Creator, in spite of His being unborn and imperishable, proliferates Himself in the form of His creation through the faculty of *maya*.¹⁰ Basing himself on this trend of thought, Sankara views reality as an integration of existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and pleasure (*ananda*), called Brahman, and considers the multifarious phenomena of the world as its varied appearances through the operation of the faculty called *maya*. This faculty he does not identify with Brahman, because it would mean that Brahman is subject to change and would thus militate against His integral unity, nor does he consider it a part of Brahman, since it would amount to regarding Him as an *avayavin* or an assemblage of component elements. He treats it as a power or faculty like heat or glow in fire. Among his commentators, Suresvara considers it the instrument by means of which unity appears as plurality and is thereby veiled in it; Vacaspati Misra holds it to be co-existent with Brahman, Sarvajnatma Muni (ninth century) declares it to be that faculty by which Brahman becomes the cause of the universe, only Prakasananda (seventeenth century) thinks that it is devoid of all objectivity, is absolutely non-existent, no better than a hallucination.¹¹ Conscious of the points in Sankara's exposition of *maya*, on account of which it is susceptible of being considered quite unsubstantial, Ramanuja rejects it altogether and considers *maya* to be the power of Brahman to create the variegated world from his two forms *cit* and *acit* (*vicitrartha sargakari*).¹² In other words, according to him, *maya* is a *prakara* (form) of Brahman himself.¹³ It is true not merely as appearance of reality but as an integral part of it.

It is clear from the above discussion of the concept of *maya* in some early Indian texts that it signifies the process by which unity becomes multiplicity and homogeneity becomes heterogeneity. It connotes the faculty of multiplication, proliferation and diversification operating in the unfolding of the universe. It means the tendency of differentiation, pluralization and variegation characterizing the evolution of nature. It is the answer to the enigma, the solution of the mystery, the key to the secret of the bewildering variety and stupefying multiplicity of forms in which the world appears to us. Its correct equivalent can be "creativity."

Since *maya* or the power and process, by which the protean diversity of the world unfolds itself baffles our understanding, we consider and describe it as miraculous and incomprehensible, and, because it conceals the basic substratum of the integrated unity of things in its manifold forms, it plays a delusive and confusing role, and, by making us treat the variety of objects as fundamentally real, it even proves misleading and disconcerting.

The aforesaid view of *maya* finds a clear exposition in the thought of medieval Indian saints of the Nirguna school, particularly Guru Nanak (1469-1539).

Guru Nanak is not only a monist but also a pantheist. He stresses the unity of the Creator and the creation. He holds that the Lord is Himself the enjoyer, the enjoyment and the enjoyed; the lover, the love and the beloved; the pond, the lotus and the swan; the fisherman, the fish, the water, the net and the weight. Again, he says that the Lord is Himself the virtue, its expounder and its commentator; the jewel, its tester and its value. In his view, the Lord is manifesting Himself in the extensions of His creation. He alone inheres in the world; except for Him, there is nothing; He is present in all places. Thus creation of God is the expression of His being.

But, in Guru Nanak's view, God creates the world or expresses Himself in it, according to a law and order. He calls this order, system and pattern, i.e. *Hukam*. It corresponds to *rita* of Vedic seers. It is the guiding principle and the controlling law of the universe.

In accordance with His *Hukam*, creation proceeds. Its first step is the transformation of unity into triplicity. Through it the integration of being assumes the three distinct forms of lightness, luminosity and bliss (*sattvaguna*), motion, agitation and dynamism (*rajoguna*) and statism, fixity and corporeality (*tamoguna*). The symbolic embodiments of these three forms are the mythical trinity of Brahma, Visnu and Siva. Then follows an unending train of elements, phenomena and objects representing various permutations and combinations of these three forms. Thus the universe of multifarious and multitudinous forms and shapes comes into existence.

Since creation is basically the expression and extension of the Integral Being, it is real and true. There is nothing false or erroneous about it. It is wrong to reject it as a fantasy.

Guru Nanak calls the potentiality and faculty of recreation, as well as the varied forms and phenomena of the world resulting from it; in other words, the power, process and patterns of the universe, *maya*, *qudret*. In his view, it is the efflorescence, sporting and the manifestation of Being in myriads of forms, shapes and things. It is the eternal interplay of the Creator (*Siva*) and of his creativity (*Sakti*), his unending immanence and inherence in the creation.

It is clear from the above exposition that Guru Nanak does not regard *maya* or *qudret* or *prakriti* as an independent entity, as in the Samkhya system, nor as the power of Brahman, which makes him appear in manifold forms of the world without inhering in them, as in the thought of Sankara, but as the burgeoning of being in the numerous aspects and objects of existence, which are all real.

However, the forms and phenomena of the universe are susceptible of being considered independent and isolated facts rather than parts and

facets of an integral harmony of being. Thus their real nature as links in the chain of existence of members of an ordered scheme of things is lost in their view as distinct and disjointed entities, having their separate *raison d'être*. This view produces the impression of individuality, egoism and conceit, which distorts their true nature. Guru Nanak calls it *haumai* and ascribes all error and fallacy to it. From this point of view, the world is no better than a dream or a fraud. A man holding this view is called a *sakta* (*sakata*), immersed in falsehood and misunderstanding. He develops attachment for worldly objects and his kith and kin and is puffed with pride and conceit in respect of them. He is afflicted by pugnacious acquisitiveness and is engrossed in collecting material articles and cleaving to them. He is deluded, deceived and despoiled and falls a prey to the baser instincts of lust, anger and conceit. He is always confused and puzzled and is in the grip of morbid, maudlin and impure feelings. Always wrapt in egoism, engulfed in dualism and complexity, he misses the essential truth which underlies the whole world. His erroneous view is like that cruel and perverse mother-in-law who prevents the bride from meeting the bridegroom or like the serpent which injects poison into the body and encompasses the destruction of man. In short, it is bondage, ignorance, illusion and error, the source of all sin and suffering and the cause of all ill and evil. It has to be torn so that one may view things in the correct perspective.

Thus we observe that in Guru Nanak's view the scheme of being is an ordered whole in which the various parts are closely interlinked and have their existence only in relation to it.

Underlying its diversity is a basic unity and integral substratum. Through its various forms runs a common element and a cohesive force. Its vast stretches and varied aspects are but manifold manifestations of a central substance. Its numerous objects and different phenomena are the enlargement and proliferation of a single Being. But often its variety or diversity entangles us so much that we neglect the unity and integrity behind it. As a result, we miss the wood for the trees, ignore the bird for the plumage and lose sight of the chain for the links. In this way, we treat the diverse objects as ultimate realities and develop a one-sided, segmental and partial view of the things. This concentration on parts and oblivion of the whole produces an exaggerated emphasis on the individual and an inflated importance of the ego. All this begets attachment, infatuation and self-centredness which disturbs the harmony of being, and ends in disaster and despair. Thus creation or existence has a twofold aspect — as a harmonious whole, incorporating the Integral Being, it is true, beautiful and beneficent, and as a disjointed congeries of parts, each appearing as the sole reality, it is false, ugly and malignant. Guru Nanak expatiates upon both these aspects of existence in his treatment of *maya*.

The substance of Guru Nanak's teaching is that we have to take the

correct view of *maya* and give up the false one. This means only a change of approach and outlook about the world rather than a rejection or dismissal of it. Thus Guru Nanak's thought is realist and positivist and provides a fitting reply to those who regard all Indian thought negationist and escapist.

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IX

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NAME

R. C. PANDEYA

The concept of Name forms the central thesis of Sikh philosophy of religion. The name of God is said to be the only refuge for a man tossed about on the furious ocean of worldly existence.

ek ot eko adharu

Nanak magai namu prabh saru

(*Gaudi*, V, p. 289)

It is also said to be the most valuable possession of a worldly man and in its absence he is poor.

bin navai sabh koi niradhan

satigur bujha bujhai.

(*Rag Sarang*, Asat. I, p. 1232)

It is called nectar (*amrit*) and is obtained rarely.

vah vah amrit nam hai

gurumukh pavai koi

(*Var Gujar*, III, p. 515)

Therefore in order to understand the philosophy of Sikhism, one has to examine in detail (i) the nature of name, (ii) its relation with the thing named and (iii) the role that the name plays in the Sikh religion.

I

A name is a collection of sounds used to designate a thing or a person or a place. Thus it has to be a *sabad* and this *sabad* has to possess the capacity to designate something. In the history of Indian philosophy, we are familiar with the controversy regarding the possibility of a collection of evanescent sounds. For a collection to be possible, its constituents must be stable. In this case, each sound disappears as soon as the next sound is uttered. Therefore, according to some, such a collection of sounds is a myth and thus a name, which is used to identify something, is itself unidentifiable. This paradox has led the Buddhists to conclude that a name, being in itself an impossibility, can never designate or refer to anything.

There are other systems of Indian thought according to which steps can be taken to remove this difficulty. The most important view, along this line of approach, is propounded by those who have some contact

with mysticism and Tantra. Briefly stated, this view amounts to upholding a distinction between an eternal sound and its momentary manifestation. The sounds we utter are actually the appearances and thus they must not be taken to be real. The real sound (*sabad*) is the supreme Reality, and the uttered sounds cannot, in fact, adequately express the real. In other words, the unity apparent in a collection of uttered sounds is owing to the unity which is the essence of the real sound, though this apparent unity too is inadequate.

This is like the Vedanta view according to which the universe is said to be an appearance of the Brahman; yet through this appearance, the *sat* aspect of the Brahman is expressed, however inadequately. Though the unity of the real sound is inadequately manifest in the apparent unity of uttered sounds, the uttered sounds are not non-entities. If viewed properly, these uttered sounds can lead one to the real sound. Therefore in the Sikh Scripture, when the word *nam* occurs, it invariably refers to the ultimate sound or *sabad*, though its apparent character is not lost sight of.

The name is free from blemishes, difficult to approach and cannot be comprehended.

nam niranjan agam agocar
satguru diya bujhae

(*Vadhans*, III, Chhand 4)

The name is called the God of the Sikh worship:

nam hamarai puja dev
nam hamarai gur ki sev

(*Bhairu*, V, 35)

There is nothing comparable to name:

nam tul kachha avar na hoi

(*Sukhmani*, 2.8)

One who is with name (i.e. apparent sound) is, in fact, with the true name (i.e. real sound). Sound is formless (*nirakar*) which means that its manifestation does not affect it.

This conception of the sound as the Absolute has given rise to the idea that the real name (*sabad*) is not only the source of apparent sounds, it is also the basis or ground for the existence of the universe. Thus the *Japji* says that both God and His name are true. The Absolute resides in name.

kirat surat mukti ik nai
tahi niranjan rahiya samai

(*Gaudi*, I, 221)

The sound pervades the entire universe; it is then watchful and ever-receptive.

sad sunda sad vekhda
sabdi rehya bharapuri

(*Asa*, III, p. 429)

The entire universe is a creation of name.

nama hi te sab kuchh banyo
khand brahmand sarir

(Sri Guru Nanak Prakash, p. 54)

Therefore the name in Sikhism is not a mere collection of momentary sounds; it is the real sound or the *Sabda Brahman* of the grammarians and the Saivas. It is in this sense that *nam* is said to be the foundation and essence of existence. The name that we utter is a way to approach the Absolute.

Momentary sounds are the manifestations of the Absolute sound. This manifestation of the eternal, timeless *sabad* is made possible because of the intervention of time or *kala*. Therefore the timeless or *akala sabad* or Absolute is really beyond the sound manifest in time. Therefore *nam* is said to be *akal* in Sikhism.

II

The function that a name is usually expected to perform consists mainly in singling out one particular object or a group thereof from another particular object or a group of particular objects. We use a name, proper or common as the case may be, to talk about and to identify something. In other words, the name can be used to designate only that thing which is identifiable and identifiability presupposes some sort of distinction. That is why the Absolute, which defies all distinctions and differentiations according to the Advaita Vedanta or the Mahayana Buddhism, cannot be named or even talked about. This means that the sphere of operation of a name is restricted only to the world of mundane experience in which the distinction is in order. In the transcendental realm, where all is said to be one, or the one is said to be all that there is or can be, names have no function. Indian philosophers and saints have proclaimed unanimously that the Real is beyond speech. Thus, according to this view, a name, be it even that of the Absolute Brahman, belongs to the realm of illusion (*maya*) or ignorance (*avidya*).

There is another line of thought leading more or less to the same conclusion. There need not be any dispute regarding the statement that what is experienced in the ordinary sense of the word experience, is nameable. But a statement does not mean the same thing as the statement, viz., "a name necessarily names a thing." A name may just fail to name anything. There are people who uncritically believe that since there is a name, there must also be a thing named in some other realm, if not to be discovered in the realm of normal human experience. These people have, on the basis of their assumption regarding the function of a name, imagined a realm populated by such things as, though not found in normal experience, have being, because their language has names for them. But no such realm can be logically shown to be possible because

of the illogical character of the basic assumption. Take for instance a common name, man. Is this a name of something common to all particular members of the class (man)? If the answer is in the affirmative, there must be a universal man over and above particular men. This would lead to an absurd conclusion that particular men are not real men because the true reference to the common name "man" is universal. A common name gives rise to the idea of the realm of universal which, in its turn, negates the final reality of the realm of concrete and particular things. Again, what does the name *vandhya-putra* (a son of a barren woman) or centaur stand for? If these names stand for something, these things must exist or subsist somewhere in some form. If there is a thing corresponding to the name *vandhya-putra* existing somewhere, obviously that thing is either not the son of a barren woman, or the woman whose son that thing is supposed to be, is not barren. In either case, this philosophy of a name invariably referring to something lands us in the realm of absurd contradiction. There, a name does not necessarily stand for a thing, although it behaves as if it does refer to something.

The conclusion that a name need not necessarily name a thing should be modified, lest we should be accused of being too rash in our argument. There is a category of names which will not be called names and which cannot be used in a language unless the thing they name is existing in the ordinary sense of the term. They are proper names; they do not again necessarily refer to something. Corresponding to an imagined proper name, say Smith, there may not be any person "B" or there may be many persons bearing that name. But take, for instance, the name "this" or "I" or "you." No person can use these names unless there are things he points his finger to. These names, although basically pronouns, behave in demonstrative situations as proper names whose reference is fixed and well defined. So in the case of pronouns behaving as proper names alone, one can say that these names, when used necessarily, refer to an existing entity. The Upanisads very often use *tat*, *idam*, *esah*, *tvam*, *aham* and similar other expressions to the effect that there cannot be any logical difficulty in demonstrating the existence of Brahman.

The use of a pronominal proper name in the Upanisads presupposes that the Brahman, so designated, must be a demonstration. One must be able to point to Brahman, which is a difficult, if not logically an impossible, task. Demonstration, as mentioned above, is possible in the case where the thing so demonstrated admits of differentiation. Brahman being Absolute cannot be differentiated even from the person so demonstrating. This means that the kind of demonstration we have talked about is not applicable to the Absolute Brahman but only to that Brahman which is covered by the condition of difference or *maya*. In the Agamas and the Tantras we, therefore, find a new approach to the problem and this approach is accepted in Sikhism as we shall see later on.

This new philosophical insight approaches the problem from the standpoint of language and not from that of reality, as the Vedantins and others do. The entire realm of language is a manifestation of consciousness and, as such, indicates that consciousness in essence is nothing but a sound or language. This argument is similar to that of the Vedanta, according to which Brahman is proved to be existent (*sat*), because its manifestation is existent. This consciousness, being in essence linguistic, can be proved in exactly the same way as the Vedantins do, to be the Absolute. In the Agamic tradition, it is called *śabda-brahman* and *anahad (anahata) nada, paśyanti vak* and other distinctions owe their origin to it. Being Absolute, it is also the source of the objective series of creation. It is not possible to elaborate the process of manifestation of linguistic and objective series according to the Agamas here. It suffices to say that with reference to the source language, consciousness and objects have no difference. Therefore when a name is uttered, it must refer to something because it is a manifestation of the positive reality. It is this positive reality that imparts unity to the evanescent sounds and makes units of language possible. It must be remembered that in this philosophy a realm of things is not postulated on the basis of the use of names, as has been pointed out earlier. On the contrary, because there is a realm of reality, the language is made possible.

Though reality expresses itself through language, every language or sound or word does not belong to the real. There are pseudo-languages created by human beings on the pattern of a real language. It is this latter type of language that needs serious consideration. This distinction between a genuine and a pseudo-language is not logical; it is based on mystic considerations. In those traditions, where the idea of a personal God is acceptable, God's words or names given by Him alone can easily be said to be eternally endowed with the capacity to be referred to. But in other traditions, according to which God is impersonal or Absolute, a difficulty is in evidence. An impersonal Absolute cannot articulate itself, though it may be of the nature of undifferentiated sound. This is sought to be removed by bringing in an intermediary through whom the undifferentiated Absolute gets articulation. A mystic or guru is he who has the vision of the Absolute and it is through him that the word-absolute articulates itself. One of the basic characteristics of such a person is that he has merged his individual identity in the Absolute and utters words which spontaneously come forth from his inner being. It is these words alone, which, coming from the mouth of a guru without any effort on his part, are genuine names and they are to be distinguished from those words or names that owe their origin to the human effort. The place of a guru in the Agamic tradition is said to be even higher than that of God, because it is through him that God is known.

Words of a guru, *Guru-bani*, are in this respect different from ordinary words. The names that a guru utters are genuine — *satnam*, because

they refer to something which exists — which is *sat*, as distinct from those things which are referred to by the ordinary beings of the world. References can be supplied from the Sikh Scripture to corroborate the view outlined above.

The Master is real and the name uttered by a guru is true, because it refers to something which is real:

saca sahib sac nai

(*Japji*, p. 2)

One who is steeped in name is steeped in truth, says Guru Nanak.

nam rate sac rahe samai

(*Ramkali, Siddh-Gosti*, 32, p. 941)

Whatever is created by God, the entire extent of creation being a real creation, is named. In other words, the extent of God's creation is also the extent of His name.

jeta kita teta nao

(*Japji*, p. 4)

Bhai Gurdas says that the word is in and through the real guru and the real guru derives his authority from his realization of the Absolute Word.

sat guru men sabda sabda men sat guru

(*Kabit Sawayye*, p. 534)

The name, the word-absolute, is the material cause of the world, the universe and the individual body.

nama hi te sab kuchh banyo

khand brahmand sarir

(*Sri Guru Nanak Prakash*, p. 54)

Thus in Sikhism there is no distinction between a name coming from the mouth of the guru and the thing it refers to. Such a name never fails to refer to a thing; therefore it is called *Sat-nam*. Ordinarily, the name that a guru utters spontaneously is the name of the Transcendental Absolute. There another meaning of *Sat-nam* is that it refers to that which is ultimately and absolutely real or *sat*.

III

What has come from the mouth of the guru is regarded as sacred, because the guru has directly realized the Absolute and in a way the manifestation of that Absolute being spontaneous through him, he is the Absolute incarnate. Therefore *Guru-bani* occupies a unique place in Sikhism. The constant repetition of names mentioned by the guru leads a devotee to the same mental and spiritual state which the guru might have experienced. The Absolute being impersonal and beyond the time-space complex can be grasped only through genuine words of a guru, because his words are never-failing. This is the philosophical secret of the adoration of the *Guru Granth*. This position is somewhat

similar to the Mimamsaka position where a *mantra* is supposed to possess the power of making a deity incarnate. Therefore the Sikh position in this respect falls in line with the Vedic tradition.

The devotee marvels at the spiritual depth to which a guru has gone and brought forth its glimpses through words. The word *vah*, when found in the *Guru Granth*, signifies the wonder the guru felt when realizing the Absolute in meditation. In fact, as Guru Nanak is meant to have said, there is no more appropriate expression of the glory of the Absolute than a word meaning exclamation.

vah nam acharaj ko hoi

acharaj te par ukhti na koi

But when this word *vah* is uttered by a devotee, it expresses wonder at the spiritual attainment of the guru.

An analysis of the religion of the Sikhs yields a philosophy of language which combines in itself, on the one hand the Vedic tradition of *sruti* and on the other hand represents the philosophy of mystic sound developed in the non-Vedic traditions like Saivagama, Buddhist Tantra and Saha-jayana. This paper was an attempt to study only one aspect of the Sikh religion. But it will be more fruitful if one undertakes to study philosophically many other aspects as well. Such a study will, in addition to clarifying the Sikh ideas, throw considerable light on the history of Indian philosophy and religion.

X

THE NATURE OF GOD

GEOFFREY PARRINDER

Doctrines of the nature of God are not only a concern of a particular theology, but of all religion. Therefore it is significant that in India discussions about the existence, nature, attributes or absence of qualities, quality or unity of God and of man have been pursued with rigorous intensity for many centuries. Never have such determined attempts been made as in India to depersonalize and demythologize the idea of God, and yet the needs of religion for some kind of symbolism and some manner of personal relationship with the divine have remained insistent down the ages.

Theological discussion is not a local matter, and in these days all the world may join in the debate. It is essential for a student of religion to consider something of what has been said in this great subcontinent on the nature of God. In this context, the declarations of Sikh thought and belief are particularly important for those who study other faiths as well.

Unicity

"There is one God." "This Being is One." "There is no other." "He is one though he has many manifestations." So declares the Sikh teaching. There are many verses in the Sikh Scriptures which affirm as fundamental the unity of God.¹

But what does unity mean? A theological term which has a limited currency speaks of "unicity," and, while it is not yet in most dictionaries, this word may be found a useful omnibus expression. It combines the notion of singularity or oneness in nature with that of uniqueness in the sense that there is no other God. A further dimension may be added by including the belief of those Indian thinkers who have insisted that God was the only being, and that men, despite their apparent difference from Him, were ultimately identical with Him, or It. This Advaita, with its variations, has long been debated, defended and denied, and we shall return to it later.

First of all, uniqueness. At many stages of religious belief men have trusted in a variety of gods. This was so in ancient Greece, among

the Canaanites and Hebrews, and in Indian religion, for example, as reflected in the *Mahabharata*. Belief in many gods may arise from the personification of nature, with its many manifestations in the sky, sun, storm, mountain, earth and sea. Most often, however, the gods were differentiated from natural phenomena, which remained as their abode or the vehicle of their power. Still, the multiplicity of gods has been held, even at high levels of culture.

There soon appeared, however, a tendency (it may not be called a law) of human thought which tried to reduce the many gods to one, or to look for a single principle behind them all. The assertion of unity of divinity was not only more elegant or simple theologically, it had ethical advantages also because it provided for moral consistency within the Godhead. So Plato looked beyond the pantheon of Mount Olympus, whose immoral myths he criticized, towards the Being, the One, the Good. Among the Hebrews it was the work of the reforming prophets of the seventh and eighth centuries to declare that "the Lord thy God, the Lord is one." And they said that all the gods of other nations were only idols. In the Upanisads, one of the most fascinating dialogues reduces the number of *devas* from 3,303 to one, the one that was the neuter Brahman, and the indescribable, *neti, neti*.²

It has been rightly said that Sikh thought is monotheistic, but that this term should not be used in a Semitic sense.³

It is not simply that the existence of other gods is denied, in the manner of the condemnations uttered by the Hebrew prophets. Belief in the unity of the divine being is not based upon argument, but upon mystical experience:

It is not through thought that He is to be comprehended,
Though we strive to grasp Him a hundred thousand times.

How then can men know God and appease the hunger of their hearts? God reveals Himself through His will, by which all things are created, which shape all life, and which is written in the heart.⁴

The relationship of the one God to the universe is of first importance. God is the creator, who established the world at His own will and pleasure, for His own purposes. But He is not simply transcendent, a great but distant architect, a God "up there." Nor is He, as the Bishop of Woolwich has insisted, a "working hypothesis," a "God of the gaps," a hypothesis that is needed to fill in some of the questions which science has not yet answered but which may be answered one day. God is the sustainer, who watches over the world; but more, he pervades it, upholding all its life, directing its affairs, and dwelling in the human heart. God is the destroyer too, who casts down what he has built up, when it seems good to his inscrutable aims.

Yet this same great God — creator, pervader and destroyer — not only fills the human heart, he has a relationship of care and fellowship with men;

The One God is the Father of all,
We are all His children.⁵

It is because of this close relationship that men can come to God as their refuge and give all their hearts to him. So the divine Name is sweet by the blessing of the Lord.

Nevertheless, in Himself God is eternal, absolute and incomprehensible. He is without beginning and end, unborn and deathless, pervading all things, and remaining the incorruptible reality. God is the Mind of the universe, greater than the universe and all human minds, as the ocean is greater than the fishes that swim in it.

Divine Attributes

The unicity of God indicates also his essential oneness or singularity. Does this mean that he is so unified that no differences can be affirmed of His nature and no attributes may be predicated of Him. In Christian doctrine, this caused the endless debates on the Trinity and the person of Christ. In Islam, there were comparable debates on the eternity of the divine attributes of the Quran. In India, there have flourished the interminable discussions of *Nirguna* and *Saguna*, God without attributes and with attributes.

It seems necessary to affirm that in his true nature, God is without form, unconditioned by attributes, and beyond human understanding:

God has no form, outline, or colour,
He transcends these three modes.⁶

Before creation, God existed in and for Himself alone, and man can say nothing about Him then. Even after creation, God remains formless:

In the realm of Truth
Dwelleth the Formless One
Who, having created, watcheth His creation
And where He looks upon them with Grace ;
And His creatures are happy.⁷

Now creation has taken place, the world exists, and men have multiplied. Man believes that he has some relationship to God, and, though he cannot by himself attain to any knowledge of the divine being, yet God reveals Himself to his saints. It is this self-revelation of God, the act of His grace, which is at the basis of all religious experience. Even at the most primitive level, the existence of religious experience is a sign that there has been an approach from God to man. An eminent anthropologist says that "all religions are religions of revelation."⁸

This implies the *saguna* aspect of God. Guru Arjun said that God is "both *nirguna* and *saguna*," and this statement expresses the thought of the other Gurus. While God has no attributes in His own nature, yet in relationship to man "the Pure One became manifest ; from *nirguna* He became *saguna*."⁹

And again,

Manifest in all things,
 He is also the Unmanifest Ground of all things (*sargun nirgun*);
 He is Formless: He is Transcendent.
 Out of Himself, Nanak, He made all things:
 Into Himself all things are again absorbed.¹⁰

God takes on attributes, in relationship to man, in order that man may comprehend something of the incomprehensible. Otherwise man could know nothing of God, and would be incapable of any religious experience. But God reveals Himself by acts of grace on the divine initiative alone, and so man can understand something of God through His *saguna* aspect.

So Teja Singh says that "God is described both as *nirgun* [*nirguna*] or absolute, i.e. without attributes, and *sargun* [*saguna*] personal, i.e. with attributes. Before there was thought of making Himself manifest in creation, He entered into the realm of relation."¹¹

The importance of this *saguna* aspect of God becomes manifest still further when, considering a third meaning which may be attached to unicity, the belief that God is the only Being non-duality, Advaita, to which we now come.

Duality and Non-duality

The unity of God, or the divine Mind, is central to such philosophy. The many gods of popular religion are seen to be aspects of the One; either the gods do not exist at all, or they have no existence apart from the underlying Reality. The affirmations of monotheism or Henotheism appear in many widely separated religions.

The gods can be reduced to unity, and the uniqueness of God is asserted. But there remains the multiplicity of human minds, as a plain fact of the phenomenal world. Therefore it has seemed to some thinkers that the urge to unification must be pressed further, the many individual minds must be merged into the one divine, and the existence of the visible universe must be denied as illusion.

It has been disputed how far the Upanisads are at all monistic, how fully they teach Advaita. Certainly there are considerable differences between some of the classical and early Upanisads, for example, between the *Chhandogya* and the *Svetasvatara*. Yet the later philosophical schools of Vedanta, whether non-dualist, modified non-dualist, or frankly dualist (Advaita, Visishtadvaita, Dvaita), all claim to be based upon and to interpret the true meaning of the Upanisads. And the *tat tvam asi* (Thou art That) of the Upanisads is the text of all later Advaita.

The Advaita doctrine comes to its fullest realization in the works of Sankara, where the divine alone is regarded as real, and all difference or separation as due to illusion, *maya*. Yet it is remarkable that even Sankara recognized the need of ordinary religion for some object of devotion, and he himself wrote hymns in praise of Govinda. A philosopher writing hymns would be astonishing in the Western world today, though Thomas Aquinas did so in the great ages of scholastic philosophy,

and perhaps Western philosophy has now become so divorced from religion that it is isolated from life itself. Yet for Sankara the value of hymns, and of religious worship in general, was that they provided for some people a means of concentrating the mind. This was one technique among others for achieving self-discipline. Such religious worship was inferior, he thought, to the true knowledge, which alone revealed the unreality of the world and the deep identity (*advaita*) between the soul and the divine. Even the God of religion, the *Isvara*, was regarded as ultimately unreal, or it was considered that He must be surpassed in the realization of the identity of all in the divine.

Indian religion in general could never be satisfied with philosophical abstractions. But there were also plenty of philosophers, like Ramanuja, who gave expression to belief in a more personal theism than was permitted by extreme Advaita. The works of Ramanuja reveal the importance of questions that are raised on the nature of God, the existence of His attributes, His relationships with men, and the nature of man, not in absorption into God but in eternal relationship with Him.

Human life has reality, not in independence of God but by relationship to Him. The goal of life is union with God, but not absolute identity with Him. The difference between communion and identity is essential for an understanding of mystical religion, as will be said later. This is implied in Sikh teaching:

He who knows God dwells undisturbed in the love of God,
God abides eternally with the man who knows God.¹²

Revelation

God is distinct from man, and has some attributes in relationship to Him. How is God most fully revealed to man?

Sometimes in ignorance of the Advaita of the philosophers and sometimes in reaction against it, the Indian epics gave lavish illustrations of divine personalities and their activities. The gods are manifested to men in voices and visions, in embodiments and *avatars*. In the Puranas, these ideas were multiplied still further, many elements were introduced which had no basis in the earlier poems, some of which were valuable and others less so. In particular, passionate and erotic themes appeared, which aroused intense religious feelings, but which could be fraught with danger.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, with its lofty teaching, knew nothing of these erotic stories, and although it taught the appearance of the divinity in bodily form, yet it did not use the term *avatara*. Nevertheless, the personal religion of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which presents divine teaching, as given to men directly, almost for the first time in Hindu scriptures, and which included one of the most terrifying divine visions in all religious literature, is recognized widely as one of the most potent early sources of devotional Bhakti religion.

Some opposition to the use of the term *Saguna* has been aroused because of its associations with Bhakti beliefs and practices of the later Vaishnavas, and especially in connection with the developed doctrines of divine *avatars*. In Sikh teaching, these are untenable. God is said to be unborn (*ajuni*), because to be born will, in due time, imply also to die, and God cannot die. Death is part of the round of *samsara*, or transmigration, and the very nature of God is above and beyond the cycle of birth and death, rebirth and redeath, coming into being and ceasing to be.

The *avatara* doctrines seem to suffer both for what they say and what they leave unsaid. An *avatara* is thought to be "a partial descent" (*ansavatara*) or "a full descent" (*purnavatara*) of the deity. In either case, it is regarded as a divine action, undertaken to destroy evil in the world and redress the balance of right (*dharma*). Yet critics have pointed out that if God is the creator and sustainer of all, and man is powerless before Him, there can be no imbalance of right and wrong, or if there is one it is due to the all-pervading deity. Surendranath Dasgupta says that the *Bhagavad-Gita* "does not seem to be aware of the philosophical difficulty of combining the concept of God as the unmanifested, differenceless entity with the notion of Him as the super-person who incarnates himself on earth in the human form and behaves in the human manner. It is not aware of the difficulty that, if all good and evil should have emanated from God, and if there be ultimately no moral responsibility, and if everything in the world should have the same place in God, there is no reason that God should take the trouble of incarnating Himself as man, when there is a disturbance of the Vedic *dharma*. If God is impartial to all, and if He is absolutely unperturbed, why should He favour the man who clings to Him, and why, for his sake, overrule the world-order of events and in his favour suspend the law of karma?"¹³

On the other hand, if an *avatara* appears in the world, and takes on some form, that form is hardly human. Dasgupta speaks of "a God who could be a man," and Krishna appears in the great epic *Mahabharata* and helps the Pandavas as a non-combatant, a charioteer. He speaks words of counsel and revelation to Arjuna. Yet the *avatara* is hardly human, for in one verse of the *Gita* it is said that he has four arms.

How far the stories of the *avatars* may be claimed as historical will doubtless remain a matter for debate. But the narratives themselves were composed and much later written down by poets and philosophers, who fashioned earlier material for their own purposes. We read, eventually, that the *Avatara* spoke to men, "the Blessed Lord said" (*Sri Bhagavanuvaca*). But the record of these words was made by the authors of the books, Vyasa and others. In somewhat similar fashion, the Hebrew prophets not only spoke in the name of God, but they claimed that God Himself had uttered their words. "Thus saith the

Lord," they said, when recording the teaching given by or coming through Isaiah, Amos and others.

But the reality of history, the true humanity of the teacher, and the accuracy of the words spoken by him, are of great importance even in mystical religion. This is why the *avatara* doctrine is not the same as the Christian faith in incarnation. The latter holds to the full humanity of the revelation, and it gives his words as a man.

In Sikh belief, we have seen, it is held that God was unmanifested and without attributes before creation:

There was no one to think of anyone ;
 Except God to think of Himself.
 God was His own emanation,
 He judged His own worth and rejoiced in His own beauty. . .
 There were no ritual observances or pious forbearances,
 Krishna was not, nor were his milkmaids. . .
 Only the Unspeakable spoke of Himself.¹⁴

But when God thought of creation, then, as Teja Singh says, "God became *sargun* or manifest. He became what is called the Name ; and in order to realize Himself, He made nature, wherein He has His seat and is diffused everywhere and in all directions in the form of love."¹⁵

The revelation of God appears in creation, and particularly in the Word (*sabad*). By meditating on the Word, man is released from the ocean of existence. The Word provides both the way of knowing God and the path that leads to Him, the means of salvation and union with God. The Word is the revelation of God, the object of contemplation, and the way of salvation.

The Guru

The Word of God, in Sikh belief, comes through the Guru ; it is the Guru's Word (*Gur-sabad*). The Guru is perfect with a divine perfection, as Guru Nanak said: "Everyone else is subject to error ; only the Guru and God are without error."¹⁶

Yet alongside of this perfection, the Guru was also a true man. Teja Singh insists on this point. "His humanity must be real and not feigned. He should have a nature subject to the same laws as operate in ordinary human nature, and should have attained his perfection through the same Grace as is available to all men and through perfect obedience to God's will." Moreover, this perfection may come after struggle and progress. "The Sikh Gurus had fought with sin and had overcome it. Some of them had lived for a long time in error, until Grace touched them and they were perfected through a constant discipline of knowledge, love and experience in the association of their Gurus. When they had been completely attuned to the Will Divine and were sanctified as Gurus, there remained no defect in them and they became perfect and holy."¹⁷

Teja Singh makes much of the unity of the Gurus, their historical person merging into mystical oneness, and the perfect personality that inhabited the succession of Gurus being finally merged into the Scripture and the community. So the Guru, in the singular, is the ladder to climb to salvation, the raft for crossing the ocean of transmigration.

The necessity of the Guru is stressed many times in the Scriptures:

The Word of the Guru is the inner music ;
 The Word of the Guru is the highest Scripture ;
 The Word of the Guru is all-pervading.¹⁸

There is no *bhakti*, no love, without the Guru, and no access apart from him to the company of the saints. The True Guru brings freedom from sorrow and the fear of death, and he gives perfect faith and enjoyment of the love of God. So men are called to serve the Guru, for in following him comes knowledge of the nature of the universe.

All Sikh Gurus go back to, and in some sense embody, Guru Nanak. But who was the Guru of Guru Nanak himself? Bhai Jodh Singh says that it was "the infinite and Supreme God" who was "the Guru whom Nanak has met." This took place when Guru Nanak bathed in the Bein River near Sultanpur, and he "received the cup of the Name from the true court [of God]."¹⁹ So ultimately the Guru is the ineffable and unsearchable God, who in grace reveals Himself to men and teaches them His Word.

The True Guru is God Himself, not in the form of a man, and the human Guru is so close to God that sometimes he appears to be identified with Him. The Guru is the Word of God, the Voice of God, and the Truth of God. The Word is the Divine revelation, without which one wanders in darkness, and with which one attains true knowledge of God.

It is not simply knowledge of facts, but it is a saving knowledge, which brings men into direct touch with God. For men cannot save themselves and they err in darkness and ignorance, but God saves men by His grace through the Guru:

By merit alone, of our deeds,
 We could never be liberated, O Lord,
 Every moment we err and sin.
 O Saviour True, save us through Thy mercy . . .
 Our Saviour saveth ; it is our Redeemer who
 hath saved us ;
 At the feet of the Guru, all deeds become fruitful.²⁰

Mystical Union

To a student of world religions, a striking feature of the Sikh doctrine is its historical element, in the events in which the Ten Gurus played so great a role. This is in contrast to some other forms of Indian religion, where history seems to have had little importance, and where

pure mythology mingles freely with legends of semi-historical persons. It has been said sometimes that emphasis upon history is a hindrance to mystical religion, which needs to be free from earthly concerns and so enabled to engage in the "flight of the alone to the Alone," after the manner of the Neoplatonists.

The importance of history for religion is manifold. One reason is that it provides an anchorage for devotion, by concentration upon a historical manifestation of the divine. The historical narrative serves as a protection against those wild flights of fancy to which the human imagination is prone. Even historical narrative, of course, may tend to become mingled with legend, but the history provides the basis for recurrent reformations of religion, by means of which men can return to the historical sources and rediscover the original purity of the faith.

It was said earlier that in mystical religion there is a fundamental difference between union with God and identity with Him, and the historical element of the revelation helps to preserve this distinction. Union, or communion, is the goal of mystics in all theistic religions. Identity with the Absolute is the goal of the *advaitin* or monist. If the Advaita doctrine is accepted, both the personal God revealed by the Guru, and the Guru himself, would be ultimately unreal. There would be no possibility of the *saguna* aspect of God, and no eternal Guru. Both of these would be illusory, like the *Isvara* of the extreme *advaitin*.

Yet at the other extreme from *advaita* stands *dvaita*, complete duality. Belief in God as to the Wholly Other, with a gulf fixed between Himself and man, is held by some prophetic religions, but it does not seem to encourage mystical devotion. Between these two extremes stand various forms of qualified non-duality.

Guru Nanak denounced duality because it is opposed to union with God. By illusion or *maya* man becomes involved in the deceitfulness of this world, in temptations and lies, and things that are passing away. This leads to death, to the endless round of transmigration, and to separation from God.

But God reveals Himself to men in creation, in his Word and in the Guru. Through His grace man enters into communion with God, in which all illusion and separation are done away with. This is because of the divine initiative, and the goal for man is union with God through loving devotion. This union demands some distinction of God and man, in which relationships can flourish. As a great modern mystic, Martin Buber, has said that there must be an "I-Thou" relationship. Certainly, this is demanded for all those relationships of love in which mystical writings delight:

O my Beloved, sleep hath fled from me,
 I lie awake and I sigh for Thee. . .
 Saith Nanak: The Lord entered my heart,
 I have found the Jewel of Life,
 The Beloved hath shown me His Face.²¹

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. In my regrettable ignorance of Punjabi I have had to rely upon translations, as in the authorized *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs* by Dr Trilochan Singh and others (1960) and Dr W. H. McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (1968).
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XI

SPEAKING ABOUT GOD

ELIOT DEUTSCH

In no other scriptural writing (that I, at least, am familiar with) is the impossibility of man's speaking truthfully about God made as forcefully and clearly as in Guru Nanak's morning hymn (the *Japji*), the most revered writing in the *Guru Granth*. Guru Nanak states:

To sing truly of the transcendent Lord
Would exhaust all vocabularies, all human powers of expression. . .¹

And:

If as many people as lived in all the past
Were now to describe Him each in His own way,
Even then He would not be adequately described...²

I propose in this paper to examine briefly the philosophical basis for this inability of man to speak truly about God and also, taking my clue from Guru Nanak, to look at what would seem to be the proper primary function of language in religious consciousness and experience.

For Guru Nanak (as for Socrates and Plotinus, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, Yajnavalkya and Sankara, Maimonides and Meister Eckhart, and for countless other seers and sages in the East and West) the state of divine consciousness is incommensurable with the finite, empirical world of our ordinary sense and mental experience. Divine consciousness is a state of fullness, a plenitude of being; it is a state of profound silence. Overturning all distinctions that obtain in the phenomenal world, the Divine thereby condemns the world to a kind of unreality or relative phenomenality. It demands that the world no longer be seen as self-sufficient and independent. The Divine discloses the insubstantiality of all phenomenal being. For Guru Nanak, the Divine is one and integral; it is a state of pure consciousness and unalloyed being.

Now for most persons the first and most natural attempt to speak about or to praise this state of consciousness and being would be to compare it with what one is already familiar with in one's common experience. But being different in kind from the world, the Divine cannot be compared truly or adequately with any object, event, quality, or process in our ordinary rational and sense experience. If, for example, when saying that the Divine is infinite, one imagines "infinite" to be just the boundless

extension of an objective state (and how else can one imagine it?) then one has clearly made the Infinite part of a finite series and has negated thereby precisely the incommensurability of the Divine and the world that one was purportedly trying to express. Nicolas Cusanus, a great Renaissance thinker, puts it accurately in this way:

From the self-evident fact that there is no gradation from infinite to finite, it is clear that the simple maximum (the Divine) is not to be found where we meet degrees of more and less; for such degrees are finite, whereas the simple maximum is necessarily infinite. . .

A finite intellect, therefore, cannot by means of comparison reach the absolute truth of things. Being by nature indivisible, truth excludes "more" or "less" so that nothing but truth itself can be the exact measure of truth.³

And in the apprehension of this self-certifying truth, that finite intellect which would make any comparison between the Divine and the world simply no longer is. In the immediate apprehension of divine consciousness, the finite intellect has no function to perform, it has no purpose to fulfil; it is overwhelmed by a spiritual silence. As Meister Eckhart, the fourteenth-century German mystic, writes:

The central silence is there, where no creature may enter, nor any idea, and there the soul neither thinks nor acts, nor entertains any idea, either of itself or of anything else.⁴

The further one is from truth, the more one is compelled to talk about it. The closer one is to the Divine, the less one is capable of uttering any name. When one inwardly possesses some thing or state of being, one has no need to objectify it. The finite intellect, it seems, works only upon what is essentially absent for one.

In short, in the depth of experience there is no one to speak. Guru Nanak states:

Where self exists
God is not ;
Where God exists,
There self is not.⁵

But, one might respond, admitting that the Divine is incommensurable with all empirical being, and admitting that all comparisons between them are, in the last analysis, futile, one should still be able to speak truly about God in a direct way, if indeed such a state of being exists. In the depth of experience silence reigns; but apart from that depth there is all manner of sound. What, then, prevents one who has had intense spiritual experience from *subsequently* speaking truly about the content or object of that experience?

The answer to this would have to be that there are several easily recognized features of our human language (whatever particular language it may happen to be) that prevents this language from being an adequate means for one to speak truly about God.

All language is grounded in distinctions. Being an intermediary, as it were, between the self and other selves and the world, language or a speech-act presupposes the distinction between subject and object. To *name* some thing, to *describe* some event, to *express* some feeling or emotion, to *explain* some process—all necessarily presuppose the existence of radical subject-object distinctions. To speak meaningfully requires a consciousness that *intends* objects. Words are themselves objects and can stand only for other objects or objectified states. But the Divine is not an object among objects: it resists all separation and overcomes all distinctions, and can thus never be a proper referent of a language-act naming, describing, expressing, explaining, and so on.

All language is time-bound. One cannot speak comprehensively all at once; one can only speak word by word successively; heaping-up meaning to be sure as one progresses gestalt-wise into structured patterns, but always in time. It takes time to think and to speak. But the Divine is timeless; it is an "eternal now" that defies all temporal categories. Hence no speech-act can truly refer to it.

Similarly, all language is grounded in spatial relationships. As Kant (and before him Sankara and other Vedantins) pointed out we can think of something only in terms of spatial categories: Try to think of something that is nowhere! Our minds, our intellects are at home only in some kind of spatially ordered world. But the Divine is "nowhere" and "everywhere"—and, consequently, no language can be wholly adequate to it.

Language is static, and thus obscures as much as it reveals the world to us. As the French philosopher Henri Bergson has shown, in our use of conceptual, abstract language and categories we classify, we put up, we analyse and we miss thereby the dynamic stuff of life and its divine creative ground. Through language we freeze experience; we lose its warmth and glow.

Further, all language is culturally conditioned. Language does not exist in the abstract but is employed by men in a culture, with a history. And no single culture, and indeed no merely additive combination of cultures, exhausts the rich potentiality and actuality of human experience. Being culture-bound, a human language cannot as such be the language of the Divine.

Logically, or in terms of a kind of inherent epistemology of language, we also have the fact that it is impossible to affirm anything or something without, at the same time, implicitly asserting or acknowledging the possibility of its denial. To say that the Divine is omnipotent, for example, carries along with it the implicit acknowledgement of the possibility of its powerlessness. "All determination is negation," according to Spinoza: every description implies a limitation. But nothing can be excluded from divine consciousness and, hence, nothing can be asserted adequately or properly about it.

The considerations that we have dealt with so far have been basically epistemic or noetic in nature: that language is grounded in fundamental distinctions, that it is time-bound, spatially ordered, static, and culturally conditioned, that it involves negation as well as affirmation. These factors explain why one cannot speak truly about God, but they don't seem, from the standpoint of the speaker, to get to the heart of the matter. For this, I think, we must look to an axiological or value dimension.

For one who has encountered the Divine in the depth of his consciousness and being, most "god-talk"—i.e., questions about God's attributes, arguments for His existence, etc.,—is simply irrelevant. It provides no intellectual stimulus, it evokes no thoughtful response. It is irrelevant precisely because a greater, overriding value of being has been grasped; a value which renders all other satisfactions of the mind (or body) as superficial and trivial. One who existentially possesses, who subjectively *is*, a living quality of being, regards as worthless and somewhat naive all questions which would detract from that authentic quality of being. Mere intellectual concern with the question (e.g., of God's "existence") only keeps one from giving the answer.

But this still is not the whole story, for there is a vast literature associated with religion, a literature which, while not exactly true or adequate when it speaks about God, is nevertheless highly meaningful. Also a great deal of religious writing was written in a manner that was very much aware of the limitations of language that we have briefly outlined. This awareness produced the fascinating symbols, metaphors, paradoxes, parables and myths that abound in religious writings. And these modes of language seem to have an appropriateness about them, and at times a remarkable spiritual efficacy. This leads to our final consideration; namely, the proper primary function of language for religious consciousness.

Guru Nanak writes:

Countless are Thy names, countless Thine abodes;
 Completely beyond the grasp of the imagination
 Are Thy myriad realms;
 Even to call them myriad is foolish.
 Yet through words and through letters
 Is Thy name uttered and Thy praise expressed;
 In words we praise Thee,
 In words we sing of Thy virtues.
 It is in the words that we write and speak about Thee,
 In words on man's forehead is written man's destiny. . .⁶

This verse suggests, and I believe rightly so, that the proper primary function of language in relation to spiritual experience is to lead others to the experience. Exhortations to perform various good deeds or various rituals and ceremonies, descriptions of historical and semi-historical events, codifications of community belief, etc., are all secondary functions

of language in religion. Primarily, in relation to the spiritual experience that is of the essence of religion, the function of language is to awaken in others the realization of the possibility of religious life. It is to point a way to that life, to guide others to it, to indicate its incomparable splendour. It is man's destiny to speak, to articulate experience, to form a culture through language; and it is man's highest destiny to realize the ground of his own being. And here, for most persons, language is indispensable. Plotinus, the great Neoplatonic philosopher, expresses it exactly in these words:

[The Truth is] 'Not to be told; not to be written:' in our writing and telling we are but urging towards it: out of discussion we call to vision: to those desiring to see, we point the path: our teaching is of the road and the travelling; the seeing must be the very act of one that has made this choice.⁷

Religious language is a teaching language; it doesn't so much reveal the nature of the Divine as it communicates to others the fruit of experience. It addresses itself to the spirit seeking its way. Guru Nanak — and here especially let us place emphasis upon the term "guru" — spoke this language, and all of us — Sikh as well as non-Sikh — are richer because of the power and authority of his speaking.

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XII

GURU NANAK'S VIEW OF GOD

A. H. ANSARI

The ultimate reality for Guru Nanak is one God who has countless attributes. His hymns contain a large number of God's names, which have been drawn from various sources — Hindu and Islamic literature and the teachings of the saints and the Sufis. That these attributes are real Nanak had no doubt. To him God is incomprehensible and indescribable, not because He is absolutely simple and has no real attributes, but because He has infinite attributes, each with infinite perfection.

Countless are Thy Names, countless Thy Abodes,
Completely beyond the grasp of imagination
Are thy myriad realms,
Even to call them myriad is foolish.

(*Japji*, 19)

There is no indication in the *Japji* or any other of Guru Nanak's compositions that he regarded the unity of God as incompatible with the diversity of His attributes. He did not construe Divine formlessness as a bare and pale unity. He made no attempt to reduce the infinite multiplicity of God's attributes to a few simple ones, as theologians would like to do. He had no theory of the levels of Divine reality (*tanazzulat*), as was common in some Sufi circles of the time. Nor did he make any distinction between an Absolute without attributes and a God with attributes, as was the practice with the Vedantins. The whole tenor of Guru Nanak's thought about God is opposed to the Vedantic view of which Sankara is the chief exponent. It may be noted that, although Guru Nanak refers to many of the gods of the Hindu pantheon, he carefully avoids the mention of Brahman, the Vedantic Absolute. The reason is that for him the variety of Divine attributes is real and there is no reality higher than God who has infinite names. This is the truth underlying Guru Nanak's preference and love of the term Name for God. He finds it most suitable to indicate the fact that the Ultimate Reality is qualified by real attributes of excellence.

God is not only a being with attributes, He is also a person. The highest truth about God is not that He is the self-existing being and is the ground of all that exists. He is, above all, the Supreme Person.

He has created the world according to His free will. He orders and sustains it. He governs and rules over it. He is generous and benevolent. He is just and merciful. He loves and forgives. He hears prayers, fulfils requests, and leads those who seek His guidance. He inspires and commands, rewards and punishes. He is not only to be contemplated, admired and praised, but also to be feared, loved and trusted. For Guru Nanak, God is primarily the object of obedience, surrender, love, devotion and worship.

Such a conception of a personal God is the demand of the way of *bhakti* which Guru Nanak considers to be the only correct approach to God. However, a true conception of God is bound to take into consideration both the aspects of God's transcendence and immanence. In Guru Nanak's compositions, the transcendence of God is greatly emphasized. The hymns extolling His transcendence are more in number than those which stress His immanence, and the forceful way in which the transcendence is expressed bears a striking contrast to the mild utterances of immanence. For instance:

Infinite is His goodness, and infinite His praise;
 Infinite are His works and Infinite His gifts;
 Where are the bounds of His seeing or His hearing?
 Unfathomable is the infinity of His mind;
 There are no bounds even to His creation.
 How many vex their hearts to know His limits,
 But seeking to explore Infinity, can find no bounds;
 The more we say, the more there is left to say;
 High is our Lord and high is His throne;
 His holy Name is higher than the highest.

(*Japji*, 24)

The note of God's immanence becomes increasingly strong in the compositions of the later Gurus. Professor Barth's statement that the religion of the *Guru Granth* "breathes the mystic pantheism of the Vedanta"¹ is not a correct assessment of Guru Nanak's views. His conception of God is essentially Islamic, a fact which extraneous considerations, ignorance and prejudice have made difficult to fully recognize and appreciate. It is often forgotten that the formative years of Guru Nanak's life were passed in a land whose "towns and villages were honeycombed with Muslim saints and faqirs. Panipat, Sirhind, Pakpattan, Multan and Uch were places where famous Sufi Shaikhs had spent their lives, and the names of Baba Farid, Alau-ul-Haq, Jalal-ud-Din Bukhari, Makhdum Jahaniyan, Shaikh Ismail Bukhari had become household words for piety and devotion."² From childhood onwards till the time Guru Nanak developed his concepts, he constantly imbibed Islamic ideas through his teacher Mulla Qutbuddin and through discourses with Shaikh Sharaf, Shaikh Ibrahim and several other Sufis.³ The influence of Islam on Guru Nanak's conception of God will be clear as we proceed to study its details. On true Islamic lines, Guru

Nanak regards God as the creator of the heavens and the earth. The whole universe, man and angels, saints, prophets and the Buddhas, and the highest gods of Hinduism—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—are all created by God. He is the only self-existing being; all else is created and dependent on Him. Nothing is eternal, except the one eternal God. Whether we understand creation in the sense of creation in time, or regard time as emerging synchronously with creation, the only being who is above time is God. None else is timeless.

Creation is a free act of God, an expression of His infinite power and wisdom. To express the idea that the working of God's creative power is a profound mystery, Guru Nanak, using a Vedantic term, calls it *maya*.

Maya, the mythical goddess,
Sprang from the One, and her womb brought forth
Three acceptable disciples of the One:
Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.
Brahma, it is said, bodies forth the world,
Vishnu it is who sustains it;
Sivā the destroyer who absorbs,
He controls death and judgement.
God makes them to work as He wills,
He sees them ever, they see Him not;
That of all is the greatest wonder.

(*Japji*, 30)

And to convey the idea that in order to create the world, God is not dependent on any external matter, and the idea that a thing comes to exist the moment God wills it, Guru Nanak employs the Quranic term, Word (*Kalima*) of God.

All creation emerging from Thy one Word
Flowing out like a multitude of rivers.

(*Japji*, 16)

All creation is His Word made manifest.

(*Japji*, 19)

It would, however, be rash to infer from the terms like *maya* or the Word of God that the world was regarded by Guru Nanak as illusory or that he was thinking of a doctrine of *Logos* on the Christian pattern.

The One God who creates also rules over the world. Everyone, low and high, seers, angels and gods are his humble servants. He alone is the Master and Lord.

What He wills He ordains,
To Him no one can an order give,
For He, O Nanak, is the king of kings,
As He wills so we must live.

(*Japji*, 27)

God's will is all-pervasive and absolute. Sorrow and joy, happiness and misery, success and failure, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice, liberation and bondage, hell and heaven, all are governed by the Eternal Writ of God. Everything is preordained and destined by the Master of destiny.

Whatever a man's portion is
God at the creation
Apportioned him that share once for all.

(*Japji*, 31)

The absoluteness of God's will is emphasized in Guru Nanak's compositions in such strong words that the human will and freedom almost pale into insignificance. But there is no doubt that Guru Nanak believed in the reality of human freedom and responsibility. Statements stressing the absolute will of God are found in all theistic religions, in Islam, Christianity and Judaism and in many schools of mysticism. It is not correct to take them as the negation of the finite will of man. Founders of religion are not theologians, their utterances are not primarily meant to be informative. They are intended to transform man and change society. Cognitive inferences from their statements should, therefore, be carefully drawn in consonance with their practical ends. A religion can hardly make any headway by paralyzing human will, which is the instrument of every change and transformation.

Every human heart is endowed with basic truths which are part of the Divine guidance to man. They are not, however, enough to lead man to God. They have to be reinforced and supplemented by extraordinary inspirations of truth. God, the True Guru, selects some from among His servants and inspires them with knowledge and sends them to teach the common people.

The light which is in everything is Thine,
O Lord of Light
From its brilliancy everything is brilliant;
By the Guru's teaching the light becometh manifest
What pleases Thee is the real worship.

(*Sohila, Rag Dhanasari*)

Guru Nanak believed that he had been inspired by God with true knowledge and wisdom and instructed to sing His praise:

I was a minstrel out of work;
The Lord gave me employment.
The Mighty One instructed me:
Night and day, sing My praise!
The Lord did summon this minstrel
To his Court High;
On me He bestowed the robe of honour...

(*Majh ki Var*, p. 150)

The words in which his inspired truths have been expressed, Guru Nanak sometimes attributes to God:

The Word of Guru is light
His Word's light leads to the Truth.

(*Sri Rag*, p. 55)

and sometimes to himself:

These words of Nanak are inspired by Thee.

(*Rag Prabhati*, p. 1330)

He even goes on to say that whatever he has learnt of wisdom, he has learnt by test and trial.

This have I found by test and trial.

(*Sri Rag*, p. 62)

The dominant note in Guru Nanak's compositions is God's benevolence, love and mercy. But the idea of His justice is also there. Guru Nanak speaks of the Divine Court of Justice.

All these lives are judged by their actions.
God is True and in His Court is truth dispensed ;
There the elect are acceptable to Him,
And by His grace and His mercy
Honoured in His presence.
In that Court, the bad shall be sifted from the good,
When we reach His Court, O Nanak,
We shall know this to be true.

(*Japji*, 34)

The belief in the life hereafter and God's justice, reward and punishment, which has been stated on Islamic pattern in these lines has been described at other places in the *Japji*. For instance:

Nanak, the man puffed up with his own wisdom
Will get no honour from God in the life to come.

(*Japji*, 22)

Along with this, Guru Nanak also entertained the belief in repeated births and deaths to expiate for one's own evil *karma*.

Some through His will are graciously rewarded,
Others must grope through births and deaths.

(*Japji*, 2)

But although suffering and salvation are determined by God's eternal decree, it is not against His justice. For justice is what He wills.

The final vision of justice is not with man,
Nor with any creature in the universe.
The Lord's alone is the vision of Justice.

(*Majh ki Var*, p. 144)

Islam's most prominent influence on Guru Nanak is visible in his concept of the unity of God and the equality and brotherhood of mankind. There is only One God, who creates and rules. Everything good or bad is ordained by Him. The whole realm of existence, besides God, is created and governed by Him. Guru Nanak makes an absolute distinction between the Creator and the created. The created cannot become the Creator. "God is inaccessible, unfathomable, altogether

distinct from His creation."⁴ It is on this principle that he rules out incarnation. The seers whom God inspires with His knowledge are not the incarnation of God. They are only the humble servants of God. Nor do the angles or the so-called gods of Hinduism partake of the Godhead.

There never was nor there ever will be
Another like the Lord.

(*Sodar-Rahiras*, 3)

He is neither begotten, nor has He any family. Every good that comes to man is His gift. All virtues, excellences and perfections are due to His grace.

All truths, all fervent austerities, every excellent act,
Every sublime achievement of the adepts,
Are Thy gifts, O Lord: Without Thee
No man could attain perfection.

(*Sodar-Rahiras*, 2)

It is in this way that Guru Nanak made every effort to secure all praise, adoration, love and worship for the One and only God. And it is to this end that he condemned image-worship and denounced idols. How can there be, he argues, an image of the One who is formless.

He cannot be installed like an idol,
Nor can man shape His likeness.

(*Japji*, 5)

The highest ideal which Guru Nanak sets before man is the spiritual union with God.

When the light of the soul merges into the Universal Light,
And the human mind comingles
With the Mind of all things,
Then our petty being,
With its violence, doubt and sorrow disappears.
Through the grace of the Guru
Such spiritual union taketh place
Blessed are they in whose hearts is the Lord!

(*Sri Rag*, p. 21)

The spiritual union envisaged in these lines is the state of the devotee when his finite will is in complete harmony with the Infinite Will; when his mind is set at rest by the grace of God in the light of divine knowledge, and he attains to perfect peace and equanimity of mind. This is attained in an emotional absorption into God, effected through ceaseless remembrance and contemplation of the Name.

I would repeat the Holy Name of the Lord;
Thus let the soul step by step
Mount the stairs to the bridegroom
And become one with Him.

(*Japji*, 32)

My mind is pierced with the Name of God.
 What else remains to hold my mind?
 In the contemplation of God is joy.
 The name of the Lord is my pillar ;
 Lord, may Thy will prevail!

(*Sri Rag*, p. 62)

This state of absorption has been sometimes referred to as "merging in God" (*Japji*, 37), and sometimes as the realization that the finite self is one with the Infinite Self.

Without the Guru's help we cannot burn
 To nothingness the ashes of self-love,
 For the Guru kindles in human hearts
 The fire of the love of God.
 Through the Guru's Word alone
 There comes the moment of knowing ;
 My self is that Self.

(*Sri Rag*, p. 59)

These lines which easily lend themselves to a monistic interpretation that upholds the absolute identity of the self and the world with the Infinite Self, the Absolute, may, however, be construed in a different way more consistent with Guru Nanak's general tenor of thought about God. The identity envisaged in these lines may be taken to mean the perfect harmony of the human will and mind with the Divine will and thought. In order to attain to this state, the devotee has not to repudiate his self-identity, but to burn the love of his self, and surrender his ego to God. For this, only the love of God is needed which should be strong enough to dominate every other love.

When the mind is polluted with sin,
 We must scrub it in the love of the Name.
 We do not become sinners or saints
 By merely saying we are ;
 It is actions that are recorded ;
 According to the seed we sow is the fruit we reap,
 By God's will, O Nanak,
 Man must either be saved, or endure new births.

(*Japji*, 20)

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XIII

GURU NANAK'S CONCEPT OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY

SURINDER SINGH KOHLI

Guru Nanak spoke about both matter and spirit. He saw around him the sport of *prakriti* or nature and also viewed the *lila* of the supra-physical energy pervading the whole universe. For him, every *jiva* has a dual personality, one in relation to matter and the other in relation to spirit, i.e., the physical and the spiritual. But for him the spiritual aspect was most significant, because matter changed or dropped in the gradual evolution of the spirit.

In this paper an attempt is made to explore the nature of the spirit, as revealed in the works of the Guru. This domain is real and not speculative. We have to open our inner eyes for a view of this metaphysical world. The fundamental enquiry about this world will be regarding the nature of the Ultimate Reality.

Mul-Mantra

An enquiry into the nature of the Ultimate Reality takes us first of all to the study of the *Mul-Mantra*, or the sacred formula. The very first word of this formula, i.e., *Ik Omkara*, is significant. It conveys the unity of Brahman and also its two aspects, i.e., the unmanifested (*nirguna*) and manifested (*saguna*). The text and translation of the *Mul-Mantra* are given below:

Ik Omkara — The One *Omkara* (the manifested as well as the unmanifested Brahman)

Satnam — His name is Truth

Karta Purkh — A *purusha* who is the creator

Nirbhau — Without fear

Nirvair — Without enmity

Akal Murat — A being whom death cannot assail

Ajuni — Unborn

Saibham — Self-existent

Gurprasad — With the grace of the *guru* (preceptor)

The *Mul-Mantra* given above presents the nature of the Ultimate Reality in a nutshell. But we shall elaborate it from the other works of the Guru.

Brahman as the Divine Principle

Brahman is One, true and pure Being. He was true in the beginning ; He was true in the beginning of the ages. He is true in the present and shall be true in the future (*Japji*). The True Brahman has created the universe which is also real like Him. The Guru says, "Thy regions and universes are true. Thy spheres and material worlds are true. All Thy works and thoughts are true. Thy court and Thy order are true. Thy judgement is true. Thy grace and signs are true. Lakhs and crores praise Thee, O True Lord. Thy might is true. Thy praises are true. O True King, Thy *prakriti* is true. They are true, who remember the True Lord, saith Nanak. Only those who suffer birth and death are untrue."¹

Brahman is immortal, or deathless. He is unknowable, infinite, unapproachable, beyond the senses, immortal, uninfluenced by *Karma*, casteless, unborn, self-existent, without any attachment, illusion, form and colour, above all relations and instincts and beyond *maya*.² He is without any equal and actually there is none other than He.³ All the *devas* or gods are His creation.⁴ It is His light which shines throughout the universe.⁵

Brahman is of the nature of intelligence or pure knowledge. He is pure consciousness. He acts consciously and controls the working of the universe as a conscious power.⁶ He is free from all imperfections (*Puran Purusha*) and is endowed with all auspicious qualities.⁷ He is imperishable ; therefore He has neither any beginning (i.e. *anadi*) nor any end (i.e. *amar*). Everything works according to His Will.⁸ From His terror, the wind blows, the rivers flow, the fire burns, Indra and Death do their duties, the sun and the moon move in their orbits.⁹

Brahman is eternal and changeless.¹⁰ He is always the same (*ik ras*), the universal being of an absolutely homogeneous nature. He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. One and the same Brahman is present everywhere ; there is none else.¹¹ Wherever we look, He is present there. There is no place without Him.¹² He is all-powerful. He can make the savage animals and birds eat grass and, to those who are grass-eaters, He can give meat to eat, according to His Will. He can create cities within seas and can merge cities into seas. If He wills, a lowly man can create a kingdom and destroy myriads of enemies. Each loaf of bread we eat is received through His grace.¹³ If He withdraws His grace, kings become lowly and, in spite of their begging, do not get alms.¹⁴ He knows everybody,¹⁵ i.e., whatever is created by Him is known to Him.¹⁶ He is the king of knowledge (*gian rao*).

Brahman is bliss. He is the source of bliss (*anand mul*).¹⁷ His form is bliss.¹⁸ He is *Saibham* or *Svayambhu* or self-existent. He is the triad, i.e., the subject, object and the mover. He is the wooden tablet, pen and the writing.¹⁹ He is associated with *maya*, and is compared

with a magician or juggler,²⁰ who creates his illusory world for a short while.

Brahman is true, good and beautiful.²¹ He is free from all difference and twofold characteristics cannot belong to him. The duality is all ignorance.²²

Names, Forms and Symbols of Brahman

There are innumerable names of Brahman, specifying his powers or qualities. The Guru says, "Many are Thy names, infinite are Thy forms, none can count Thy qualities."²³ But Brahman Himself does not take birth. All the gods or *avatars* (incarnations) are created by Brahman; therefore they are not to be considered Brahman. There is no doubt that the whole creation is the manifestation of Brahman. All that we see or hear is Brahman. This is *saguna* Brahman but Brahman to whom we have to dedicate ourselves according to the Guru is *nirguna* (without any qualities). He has no form and colour; therefore He is without any symbols. He cannot be comprehended through any imagined symbol.

The Guru used several current names of God in his compositions such as Madhusudan, Murari, Damodar, etc., but he never attached any significance to these names. They were used for the convenience and understanding of the populace. In order to bring home to the common man the omnipotence of the Lord, the Guru referred to their mythological stories, describing the victories of God over the demons.

The Guru while discarding all other symbols, considered Brahman's name as mere outward symbol and the only mode of contact with Him. The most important names, according to him, are *Aumkar* and *Sat*.

Brahman is *Akshara*. Brahman is light. Brahman is the highest person (*purusha*). He is compared to a fig-tree, roots of which grow upwards and the branches of which grow downwards.²⁴ The human body is the city of Brahman and He lives in the lotus of the heart therein.

Oneness of Brahman

Brahman is one without a second.²⁵ All the regions, spheres and worlds are contained in Him. Both unity and diversity are true of Him, because whenever He wills, He becomes many and whenever He desires, He again becomes One. He is the bright immortal person (*Akal Purusha*) in everything. Being the only One, He is the sovereign of all the creation.²⁶ Having no equal, He is without fear (*nirbhau*) and without enmity (*nirvair*). He is seen as manifold only through nescience.

Brahman and the World

Brahman is the creator of the world. He is the material as well as the efficient cause of the world. He is the source of all beings and

the support of the universe. He has placed the sky without any prop. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer. Everything is born of Him and is finally absorbed in Him.²⁷ He is the seed of the tree of creation.

The Guru has used the word *qudret* (nature) for the creation. He addresses the Lord: "All is thine, *prakriti* or *maya*. Whatever we see or hear is the manifestation of Brahman."²⁸ The Guru says, "Brahman is Himself Kavala (Lakshmi), or Maya, and He Himself is her Lord." It is a strange phenomenon that the lady (Maya) is within the Lord and the Lord is within the lady.²⁹

The world is a sport (*lila*, *khel*) of Brahman. It is like a theatrical performance being played during the darkness of the night. In this *lila*, Brahman is the creator and dispenser; He acts with a view to the merits and demerits of the individual souls.³⁰ Before the creation of the world, Brahman is *shunya* (*shun*) or non-being, who is absorbed in abstract meditation. He is different from the world in this respect, but becomes associated with it after its creation.

There are unlimited regions, spheres and universes in the abode of the True Brahman.³¹ The *maya* of the Lord has been depicted by the Guru as a hungry and angry woman, which has devoured the whole world, including the chief gods Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva.

Brahman and the Individual Soul

The *atman* (*purusha*), or the soul (self), is one with Brahman. The soul is within the Highest Self and the Highest Self is within the soul.³² Both are identical. If the self is known, the Highest Self is also realized. Just as the soul is related to the body, the Highest Self is related to the universe. Both the soul and the body belong to Brahman.

Because of its individuality, the soul appears different from Brahman, though it is a part and parcel of Him. Both matter and the individual souls are real constituents of Brahman's nature.³³ Whereas the soul is *purusha*, Brahman is *Karta Purakh*, *Akal Purakh*, *Adi Purakh*, *Niranjan Purakh*, *Sat Purakh*. Brahman is the internal ruler of the *purushas*.

The individual soul has its limitations and, because of these limitations, it cannot understand Brahman fully. The imperfections of the soul due to its association with the mind and the intellect are only its own failings; Brahman is perfect. The soul is saved by meditation on Brahman. The released soul enjoys supreme bliss, which is an attribute of Brahman.

The Higher and the Lower Brahman

Although Brahman is one, it has two aspects—the one without attributes (*trigunatita*) or *Nirguna* and the other with attributes or *Saguna*. Guru Nanak has depicted the two aspects of the Lord in his poem entitled

Arati, wherein he says, "Thou hast a thousand eyes but without eyes Thou art ; Thou hast a thousand feet, but without any feet Thou art ; Thou hast a thousand nostrils, but without any nostril Thou art. This act of Thine hath fascinated me."³⁴ The Lord without any form, colour or lineage is called the Higher Brahman or Para Brahman, but his other aspect with name, form and colour is known as Lower Brahman or Ishvara. In one of his hymns, the Guru has addressed Ishvara thus: "Thine eyes are radiant and teeth exquisite ; Thy nose is stately and Thy hair is long. Thy body is golden."³⁵ This description is metaphorical, conveying only a bit of the beauty of the Lord. However, the Guru has clearly asserted at several places in his compositions that the Lord is indescribable.

The syllable *Aum*, which is Upanishadic in origin, has been used by the Guru in the beginning of the *Mul-Mantra*. It is suggestive of the higher and the lower Brahman. The lower Brahman is associated with *maya* and from this association are born Brahma (the power of creation), Vishnu (the power of preservation) and Shiva (the power of destruction). The lower Brahman is the vital principle in all creatures and is worshipped and meditated upon. But the lower or qualified Brahman is fundamentally one with the Higher or Unqualified Brahman. Because of this oneness, the lower Brahman can be designated as Brahman. He is the Self of all.

Before the creation, the Higher Brahman was absorbed in abstract meditation. When it was His will, He, as Ishvara, created the universe in association with *maya*. The soul's aim is the realization of the Higher Brahman—this fact has been emphasized by the Guru.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Asa Var*, 1, 463.
2. *Sorath*, 1, 597.
3. *Gauri Var*, 4, 301.
4. *Maru*, 1, 1028.
5. *Asa Var*, 1, 414.
6. *Asa Var*, 1, 464.
7. *Japji*, 4.
8. *Japji*, 1.
9. *Asa Var*, 1, 464.
10. *Asa*, 1.
11. *Dhanasari*, 1, 660.
12. *Dhanasari*, 1, 661.
13. *Majh Var*, 1, 144.
14. *Asa Var*, 1, 472.
15. *Asa Var*, 1, 463.
16. *Majh Var*, 1, 138.
17. *Dhanasari*, 1, 685.
18. *Maru*, 1, 1041.
19. *Malar Var*, 1, 1291.
20. *Asa Var*, 1, 422.
21. *Japji*.
22. *Gauri*, 1, 226.
23. *Asa Var*, 1, 358.
24. *Gujri*, 1, 503.
25. *Gauri*, 1, 223.
26. *Basant*, 1, 1169.
27. *Sri Rag*, 1, 20.
28. *Asa Var*, 1, 464.
29. *Ramkali*, 1, 879.
30. *Japji*, 7.
31. *Japji*, 1, 8.
32. *Bhairon*, 1, 1153.
33. *Maru*, 1, 1011.
34. *Dhanasari*, 1, 663.
35. *Vadhans*, 1, 567.

XIV

AFFINITIES BETWEEN GURU NANAK AND JESUS CHRIST

RICHARD V. DESMET

The distance that separates Guru Nanak and Jesus Christ appears great in time, in space and the cultural origin. Yet there is a remarkable convergence of their teachings and it is a rewarding study to explore and expose their more outstanding affinities. In this study I have found not only intellectual satisfaction but even more a new incentive for my love of God in genuine communion with the whole Sikh community.

The more striking affinities which I wish to underscore concern (a) the True Name of God, (b) the teaching of monotheism, (c) the divine forgiveness of sins, (d) the purification and "desacralization" of religion, and (e) the kind of virtues extolled by both Teachers.

The True Name of God

"I abide in the Name, and the Name abides in my heart," says Nanak.¹ "There is but One Name, One God, One Light in the three worlds (135)." "It is by meditating on the Word and repeating God's Name that you will cross the world safely (171)." "They in whose hearts is the True Name, have the marks of it on their brows (8)." However, it is only "by God's mercy that men obtain it, not by idle words (9)." "The greatness of the Name is bestowed according to Thy pleasure, (O God) (20)." Indeed, "truth, fervour, goodness, and the excellences of perfect men cannot be obtained in their perfection without Thee; (but) if Thy grace be obtained none can be excluded (24)." Nanak has obtained it and he sings, "O Lord, Thy Name alone is the madder with which my robe is dyed (26)." From these sample passages taken from the hymns of Guru Nanak, it seems clear that for him the Name signifies God as the dispensing grace and mercy to his creatures. The Name is the very theophany of the merciful Lord. It is God with us and for us. It is also God as truly proclaimed in his unicity of greatness, divinity and creative power. The Name stands for the One God as communicated to us through His creative Word. His is permanent indwelling and His is enlightening and saving grace.

Early Christianity also emphasized God's Name and proclaimed Jesus as the Name embodied among us. This is particularly true of the Palestinian preachers and believers who substituted for Name the term Word or *Logos* which was more consonant with the Greek turn of mind. But inside Palestine, they continued to speak like Jesus himself of the

Name, according to the usage of the Old Testament. About fourteen centuries earlier, God had revealed to Moses that his proper name was YHWH, probably pronounced Yahweh and signifying "He Who Is." But in the course of time the Hebrews had adopted the rule, out of respect for the sacred name, to abstain from pronouncing it and to substitute for it the name Adonai or simply the Name (*Shem*). Accordingly, the Name was given the attributes of Yahweh himself, namely, holiness and glory (*Tob.*, 8, 5). It designated God in His sanctifying presence in the Temple (*Deut.*, 12, 11).

The writers of the New Testament continued this usage. Thus in *Acts*, 15, 17 Luke quotes *Amos*, 9, 12: "My Name has been called upon the nations," and in *Acts*, 2, 21 he quotes *Joel*, 2, 32: "Whoever will call on the Name of the Lord will be saved." Paul mentions *Isaiah*, 52, 5 in his *Letter to the Romans*, 2, 24: "Because of you, the Name of God is blasphemed among the nations," and in the same letter, 9, 17 he quotes *Exodus*, 9, 16: "That my Name may be proclaimed throughout the whole world." Jesus himself prays, "Father, glorify thy Name," (*John*, 12, 28), and teaches his disciples how to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name (*Matt.*, 6, 9)." In non-canonical writings of the early Judaeo-Christians, the centrality of the Name in religious language and in the first attempts of theological speculation is everywhere evident.²

Another early Christian usage connected with the Name is the *sphragis*, i.e., the signing of the newly baptized Christian with a cross-sign on his forehead. This cross-sign was not originally a symbol of the cross upon which Jesus had died on Calvary but the Hebrew letter *Tav* which was then written as + or sometimes as x. Now *Tav* was the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and had on that account been chosen to represent the Name of God. *Revelation*, 7, 2, looking back to *Ezekiel*, 9, 4, states that the saints are to be marked with this seal on the brow.

Concerning the interpretation of the Name there is a novelty which distinguishes the Christians from the Hebrews. To them, Jesus is the very incarnation of the Name. He is, indeed, the Word of God the Father in his most merciful manifestation. When Paul and John designate him as the Name, they wish to signify his divine nature which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit and by which these three persons are designated only as one God. It is only in the writings of the next generation of Judaeo-Christians that the Name will designate the very divine person of Jesus. Jesus, then, as the Name, is the very hope of Christians. They are told to do everything in his Name. They bear this Name on their foreheads in the form of + so that they may be borne by him and attain salvation through him.

Later on, as Christianity progressed in the non-Hebrew milieu of the Greek and Roman world, the vigour of the conception of the Name

became attenuated. It became almost restricted to signify the name of Jesus, whose etymological meaning is "Yahweh saves," and it was understood as expressing the saving power of Jesus due to the presence in him of the divine nature. As such, it remained one of the main invocations used in the public liturgy as well as in the private prayer of the Christians. Litanies of the Holy Name mark the piety of later ages and a sort of *japa*, known as the mental repetition of the Jesus-prayer, has developed from the monastic centre of Mount Athos among the Hosychasts. The term "desychast" means "addicted to silence" and designates Christian monks who practise a sort of yoga focused on the mental integration of the Jesus-prayer: "Jesus, son of God, have pity on me, a sinner." In the countries of Eastern Europe, many lay people adopted this way of spirituality centred on the saving Name.

Monotheism

The chief teaching of Guru Nanak is clearly set forth in the first lines of the *Japji*: "There is but one God, whose Name is true, the Creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, self-existent, the Guru merciful. Repeat His Name (195)." This God whose unity and majesty Guru Nanak never ceases to proclaim is utterly transcendent; he is "the unseen, infinite, inaccessible, inapprehensible God (330)." But although shrouded in mystery and spoken of in negative language, he is the Summit and the Source of all positivity, the "omnipotent, kind Creator (154)." "The heavens and the earth shall pass away; He, the one God alone, is permanent... The one God alone is our resting-place (154)."

His very transcendence allows him to be most intimately immanent in all his creatures. His omnipotent will directs the whole course of the universe, never to be frustrated. "It is God Himself who acts; to whom should we complain? No one else acts (99)." This strong affirmation of the paramountcy of God's will verges on predestination, but it is only meant to vindicate the unicity of the Source of all power and activity, not to inculcate a fatalistic acceptance of God's decrees. Similarly, we know that Guru Nanak's disciples never understood him to be a pantheist, though he sometimes seemed to speak like one, as when he said; "He Himself is the Relisher: He Himself is the relish; He Himself is the Enjoyer (265)." Guru Nanak, indeed, spoke the language of Hinduism as well as that of Islam, but only to express a very pure, very comprehensive and very balanced view of the one True God. This is the God whom he sometimes called "Father (112)" or even the Beloved: "Nanak says, the Beloved is not far from thee; behold Him in thy heart (85)."

Nanak's singing of the true God seems like an echo across the centuries of the monotheistic preaching of Jesus. Jesus himself had

resumed the old Biblical teaching about God and expanded it. According to him, God is the Yahweh of Moses, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one God whose unity is vigorously affirmed: "We know that there is only one God, the Father, who is the Creator of all things and for whom we live (1 *Cor.*, 8, 6)." "There is one God and Father of all men, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all (*Eph.*, 4, 6)," "for in Him we live and move and are (*Acts*, 17, 28)." The One God is Spirit (*John*, 4, 24), Love (I *John*, 4, 8), Light (I *John*, 1, 5), the universal Giver: "Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. He does not change, nor does he cause darkness by turning away. By his own will he brought us into being through the word of truth (*James*, 1, 17-18)." Jesus said: "No one is good, except God alone (*Luke*, 18, 19)."

One day, a teacher of the Law asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important? One is this, 'Hear, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. You must love the Lord, your God with all your heart, and with all your strength.' The second most important commandment is this: 'You must love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment more important than these two (*Mark*, 12, 28-31)." This reply of Jesus is marvellously monotheistic as well as humanistic and, while transcending sheer legalism, it does not empty the law but redeems it.

But what is proper to Jesus in his teaching about God is what he reveals of God's mysterious Trinitarian intimacy. Orthodox Christianity never understood its belief in the divine Trinity to detract in the least from its relentless proclamation of the unicity of God. For my purpose, it may be sufficient to point out this matter of Christian consciousness without entering into explanations which would claim too much of my limited time.

Purification from Sins

The third affinity which I wish you to notice between Guru Nanak and Jesus Christ refers to their teachings about sin and its forgiveness by God. Both of them affirm that "whatever a man sows, that he will reap;" this very statement is found in the Guru's alleged reply to Mian Mitha (124) as well as in *Gal.*, 6, 7, which continues: "If he sows for his sensuality, from that sensuality he will reap perdition; but sowing for the Spirit, from the Spirit he will reap eternal life (6, 8)." Beyond this essential part of the theory of *karma*, the two teachers differ, Nanak accepting the theory of rebirth without questioning it and Jesus rejecting it implicitly or even perhaps explicitly in rare passages. Even reduced to its essential core, the theory of retribution is prone to incite man to despair. For who shall escape the sway of his own actions? Who, indeed, unless the very law of retribution can be transcended by the forgiving power of the merciful God?

That God is merciful (62), that He is our Friend (134), that He Himself pardons (126), is the good news preached by Nanak after Jesus. Sins can be washed away, not by ritual baths but by a sincere love for God: "He who hears and obeys and loves God in his heart shall wash off (his impurity) in this place of pilgrimage that is within him (206)." "When the True Guru is merciful, man shall know no sorrow (150)." "By attaching himself to God's Name he is saved; he has no other resource. Even if he be drowning (in sin), God will still take care of him. Guru Nanak says: "The True One is beneficent to all (107)." To a sinner, such as Shaikh Sajjan, the Guru said: "At the throne of God, grace is obtained by two things: open confession and reparation for wrong." And the Shaikh confessed his numerous crimes and gave the poor all the property he had stolen. Thus he became a true Sikh (47).

In the life of Jesus, there are many similar events in which his teaching or his mere presence arouses sinners to repentance and they receive from him the assurance of their pardon. Let me recall at least one instance which parallels that of Shaikh Sajjan. "When Jesus was passing through Jericho, there was a chief tax-collector, named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a short man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore-tree to see Jesus, who would be going that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, 'Hurry down, Zacchaeus, for I must stay in your house today.' Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, "This man (Jesus) has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!" Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Listen, Sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor; and to anyone I have cheated, I will pay back four times as much." Jesus said to him, "Salvation has come to this house today; this man, also, is a (spiritual) descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (*Luke*, 19, 1-10)."

In one of his parables, Jesus opposed the proud pharisee and praised the humble tax-collector against the common opinion which despised the latter and exalted the former. Both went up to the Temple to pray. "The pharisee stood up and said this prayer to himself, 'I thank you, God, that I am not greedy, dishonest or immoral, like everybody else; I thank you that I am not like that tax-collector.' The tax-collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, 'O God, have pity on me, a sinner.' I tell you, this man, and not the other, was in the right with God when he went home (*Luke*, 18, 10-14)." The same humility that is praised here marks Nanak's prayer, as witness the following short selections from the *Guru Granth*:

I am a sinner; Thou alone art pure.

As full as the ocean is of water

So many are my vices.
Bestow mercy, have compassion,
Cause the sinking stones to cross.

* * *

I am a sinner ; 'Thou art the pardoner.

* * *

May on me, the sinner and vicious man,
Favour be bestowed.
O Lord, be merciful to me
'That Nanak may cross.

Desacralization

The term 'desacralization' stands for a process by which a religion overgrown with superstitions, legalism, absurd commands and interdicts is freed from them and reinteriorized by an appeal to reasonable faith and the enlightened judgement of conscience. I find that both Jesus Christ and Guru Nanak have been great desacralizers. I find nothing in their teaching that could favour religious ethnicity and particularism but, on the contrary, a catholicity of truth and a call to those virtues that can unite rather than divide mankind.

Hindus and Muslims, sadhus, sanniyasis, fakirs and shaikhs urge Guru Nanak time and again to adopt their special dress and way of religious pursuit, and every time he resists them and teaches that true *dharma* cannot be a matter of dress, or food, or particular habits. "Why should I tear my coat or adopt a religious garb? Men may stay at home and work in their ordinary costume and yet find the Lord if they fix their hearts on Him (103)." Cooking-vessels, the so-called pure fuels, foods or ways of cooking are of no account if the soul is not saturated with the true Name (133). The practices of the yogis are of no avail unless there corresponds to their external austerity the inner renunciation which conditions the rise of true humility and the love of God: "He who washes the filth of pride from his heart, he is an *udasin* (159)." "To be constant in devotion, penance, self-restraint, and the remembrance of God, these are the marks of a *yogin* (160)." To followers of Gorakhnath who told him that a yogi should wear earrings, a patched coat, and carry a wallet, a staff and a deer's horn, he offered spiritual substitutes for all those externals: the guru's words for earrings, forbearance as a patched coat, divine knowledge for a staff and God's praise as the sound of the horn (162-3). Guru Nanak rebukes the hypocrisy of those who put on a sacred thread but tie no string upon their senses and tongues (18). It is useless to be painted on all sides but be hollow or empty inside, or to be like a heron arrayed in white but devouring living creatures (46). Let religion be sincere and truly universal. Let us not draw sacred lines to keep away those we call impure, but let the whole earth be our sacred lines and let us consider pure all those who love truth (43). The struggle of Jesus Christ

against hypocrisy and phariseism is well known. Pharisees boasted of their uprightness which came from their meticulous observance of all the niceties of a very detailed law. They took law, which can only be a means for an end in itself and forgot the active love of God and fellowmen which it has to subserve. Jesus opposed the pharisees on points which were very sore with them; he healed men on the Sabbath-day; he spoke in his own name rather than merely quote Scripture; he even overruled Moses, the Legislator. Jesus said that "the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath" and added that He, "the Son of Man, is also Master of the Sabbath (*Mark*, 2, 27-28)." Jesus stigmatized the pharisees' vain concern for ritual robes, tassels and phylacteries, their conceited desire for public praises and honours, for seats and beds of honour and for being called *Rabbi* (my Master) or *Rabban* (our Master). He derided their anxiety concerning external purity in food and drink, cups and plates, but unconcerned with the internal purity of thought, desire and speech. "You, pharisees," he said, "clean the outside of your cup and plate, but inside you are full of violence and evil (*Luke*, 11, 39)." "You give to God one-tenth even of your seasoning herbs, mint, dill and cumin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty... You are like whitewashed tombs, which look fine on the outside, but are full of dead men's bones and the rotten stuff inside. In the same way, on the outside you appear to everybody as good, but inside you are full of lies and sins (*Matt.*, 23, 23 and 27-28)."

Hypocrisy is but the offshoot of legalism.- When people give first importance to the accidentals of the religious law, they soon take their observance as a mask to hide their own lack of inner conformity with the essentials of pure religion. So they parade themselves as true disciples, whereas in their hearts they betray the divine Guru. And this is why both Guru Nanak and Jesus Christ never cease to oppose legalism and to rebuke hypocrisy. To counteract these evils they invite all men to become true disciples by accepting the true faith, invoking the one true Name and, as we shall now see, acquiring the genuine virtues that curb pride, selfishness and greed, and bring about true perfection.

The Virtues of Genuine Holiness

When Jesus and Nanak desacralize the ethical religions of their times, their goal is not to destroy religion but to make it genuine in the hearts of men. Rather than maintain that things are sacred, they wish to make men holy. To the question, "What is a holy man?" Guru Nanak answers as follows: "Recognize him as holy in whom are to be found friendship, sympathy, pleasure at the welfare of others, and dislike of evil company. Holy men entertain pure intentions, are pleased to hear the praise of others, serve the virtuous, honour people of good

counsel, crave for divine knowledge, love their wives and renounce other women, are peaceful, respectful, considerate, and search to associate only with the holy (136-7)."

Similarly we know from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount that the holy and blessed are those who are inwardly poor, pure in heart, merciful, compassionate and meek, who work for peace among men, whose greatest desire is to do what God requires, and who are glad even to suffer for doing it (cf. *Matt.*, 5, 3-10).

Jesus says, "Blessed are the hungering and thirsting for righteousness ; for they shall be satisfied (*Ibid.*, 5, 6)," and Guru Nanak says, "Nanak is hungry for God and cares for naught besides ; I ask for God, I ask for nothing else (57)." Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of Him that sent me (*John*, 4, 34)," and "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God (*Heb.*, 10, 7)." Nanak says, "I am a sacrifice to the Name (75)." "I am a sacrifice unto Thee (42)." "To obey (God's Word) is all sweet flavour ; to hear it is salt flavour ; to utter it with the mouth is acid flavour ; and to sing it is spices (97)." Jesus says, "The Kingdom of God is within you (*Luke*, 17, 21)," and "The real worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and truth ; because, indeed, the Father desires such to be His worshippers. God is Spirit ; and those worshipping Him must worship in truth and spirit. (*John*, 4, 23-24)." And Guru Nanak says, "You will not go to heaven by lip-service ; it is by the practice of truth that you shall be delivered (39)." "Abide pure amid the impurities of the world (60)." Jesus says, "I tell you to love your enemies ; bless those who ill-use and persecute you : then you will become the true song of your Father (*Matt.*, 5, 44-45)." And Guru Nanak says, "He who looked on all men as equal is truly religious (60)." "Nanak is with those who are low-born among the lowly (186)."

Conclusion

Much more could be said about the five affinities I have emphasized in this paper and many other similarities could be brought forth regarding both the teachings and the lives of these two great teachers of mankind. Dissimilarities also exist and should not be ignored. But my aim today was not to exhaust the subject but to associate myself with you all in paying homage to the saintly Guru Nanak. I have done it on the basis of what I consider most precious, namely, the teachings and personality of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, in what you value and in what I value that we meet and can engage in a profitable dialogue. In an encounter of this kind, we are not left to our human resources but God presides and He assists us with his grace and light as the inner Guru whose Name is true. It is He who brings us together in spite of the barriers that seem to separate us. It is He who arouses in us the love for God and men which, even unknown to us, binds us together in a blessed unity. For, in the words of Guru Nanak, "However much

one may desire it, a meeting is not effected by words ; but metal blends with metal and love hastens to love (108-9)."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For the sake of easy reference, my quotations of Guru Nanak's words are taken from Macauliffe, M.A., *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, recently reprinted and published by S. Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1963. After each quotation, I simply indicate the page-number which, for the first, is 135.
2. Cf. J. Danielou, *The Christian Centuries*, Vol. 1, London: Darton, 1964, and his *Theologie du Judeo-Christianisme*, Paris, Descies, 1958, pp. 199-216.

XV

THERE IS NONE BUT ONE GOD

ROMA CHAUDHURI

At the dawn of human civilization a most basic question was asked in the holy hermitages of India:

ko ka atma, kim brahmeti

(*Chandogya Upanisad*, 5. 11. 1)

Who is our *Atman* or soul? What is *Brahman*?

This, in fact, represents the most fundamental desire of the human mind for the knowledge of truth—*Satya-Jnana*. But what is truth? Truth represents the real nature of things as they, finally and fundamentally, are as distinct from all appearances to the contrary. Now, what are the things that we see and know all around? First, our own selves, the individual souls, the *jivas*; second, the world around where we live, the *jagat*. These two realities we know directly; and want to know fully, but our enquiry regarding truth is not complete with them. A still more fundamental enquiry has to be instituted regarding the First, as well as regarding the Final Cause; the “wherefrom” and the “how” as well as the “whereto” and the “why” of life. Each human being has to ask these questions but it is not for each to answer them fully or satisfactorily. So, such ordinary persons have to look to seers who can answer these fundamental questions for them, and thereby help them to progress steadily towards the great goal of human lives, self-realization.

One of the brightest of such seers was Guru Nanak. And what do we find in him? We find a simple and a straightforward approach to the core of the problem, without any scholarly pretensions, any philosophical squibblings or any bombastic effusions. It was this straightforward approach of Guru Nanak that appealed to the masses in their fundamental questions of life.

In answer to their quest, Guru Nanak echoed with simplicity the message, which was taught by past masters. He states: “Nanak, there is none but the one God.” Again he says:

Thou art the tablet, O Lord, Thou art the pen, and Thou art also the writing. Speak of the one God, O Nanak, why should there be a second? There is one; is there any other? There art only Thou, there art only Thou, O God.

Thus, according to Guru Nanak, the first fundamental characteristic of God is His absolute, unblemished, eternal oneness.

The second fundamental characteristic, according to Guru Nanak, is His creatorship. God is one, yet He becomes many; for He is not a selfish God, but one who is ever-generous, ever-gracious, ever-helpful, sharing His nature with all, manifesting His beauty to all, and showering His blessings on all. Guru Nanak says repeatedly:

God Himself created the world and Himself gave names to things.
He made *maya* by His power, seated He beheld His work with delight.
O Creator, Thou art the giver, being pleased,
Thou bestowest and practisest kindness.
Thou knowest all things; 'Thou givest and takest life with a word.
Seated, Thou beholdest Thy work with delight.
The Creator is the True Lord,
Who carefully supporteth the globe of the earth.
The Creator beholds the work of His hands, true and independent.
He created the different species of animals.

This great God creates this vast and variegated universe of souls and matter joyfully; and equally joyfully does He behold His own work of creation. But why? Simply because, His creation is nothing but a full manifestation of His own blissful nature.

We are here reminded of that great Indian doctrine of bliss, or the superb *Ananda-Tattva*, which forms the very basis of our age-old Indian culture and civilization. According to this theory, the whole universe is nothing but a beautiful manifestation of God's own bliss.

Anando brahmeti vyajanat.
Anandadhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante;
Anandena jatani kivant; anandam pravanti abhsamvismati.

(*Taittiriya Upanisad*, 3.6)

He knew Brahman to be bliss. From bliss alone all these beings arise; by bliss are they sustained; to bliss do they return.

Thus, according to our holy saints and sages, seers and philosophers, and Guru Nanak, the entire universe of souls and matter is not a sinful and sorrowful place, but bliss in essence. We only make it sinful and sorrowful through our own ignorance, our own illusion and delusion, false conception and selfish desires.

Regarding the creation, there is another connected theory, *lila-vada* or doctrine of play. The question here is: Why does God create the world? Ordinarily, most acts proceed from selfish desires or motives on our part, and we work for removing a want, for attaining an unattained end, or for gratifying an ungratified desire. But God is an ever-pure, ever-perfect, ever-satisfied, ever-free, and ever-full Being. So, evidently, He cannot have any want or imperfections on His part at all. Hence His act of creation is not an ordinary act but it is only a manifestation of His eternal bliss. Bliss being a kind of emotion has a tendency to

express itself in external acts, like plays. So, the Divine bliss expresses itself in Divine play and the universe is such a Divine play, nothing more, nothing less. This has been beautifully set forth in the *Brahma-sutra* :

Lok vat tu lila kaivalyam.

The world is nothing but a play on the part of God. In Guru Nanak we find the same doctrine of play.

The kind, the Supreme God, made the play of the play of the world to behold it. He seeth, understandeth, and knoweth everything.

The third fundamental characteristic of God is that He is both transcendent and immanent, inside His own creation, yet outside it. As a matter of fact, this question of transcendence and immanence is a fundamental one in monotheistic schools of thought; and also a controversial one for, how can the partless or God have parts. The solution to this problem lies in the fact of the paradox between *fully* and *wholly*, as found also in our worldly phenomena of "life" and "consciousness." Take the example of a living body. "Life" as a fundamental phenomenon is present in every single part of such a living body, in every smallest part, for, if such a part be not a living one, the whole body will be dead. So life must be present in each and every part of the living body — also fully present, for life can have no divisions at all; yet it is not wholly exhausted in any of these parts; for, then, how can other numerous parts be similarly animated?

Exactly the same is the case with consciousness. Consciousness must be present in every single mental state; otherwise, it cannot be called a state or a process of consciousness at all. So consciousness must be present fully in one and every one of such conscious states, as consciousness, like life, is one indivisible whole. Yet it is not wholly exhausted in any one of the states or processes.

In exactly the same manner, God is both transcendent and immanent, yet *niramsa* or without parts. God as one indivisible, partless Being is present fully in all, yet, He is not wholly exhausted in any of the parts; otherwise, how can other parts be called His effects or transformations? Thus, God, without any division on His part, is fully present in each and every part of the universe of souls and matter, yet present as fully in every other part; and, finally, transcends the universe.

When God created the universe of souls and matter out of His own nature, out of His infinite bliss, He became both transcendent and immanent. Thus Guru Nanak says:

He is within and without His creation.

Think upon One who is contained in everything.

The Lord who created the world and drew it within Himself

Is known by His omnipresence.

Search not for the True One afar;

He is in every heart, and known by the Guru's instruction.

By the Guru's instruction, know the True One who made creation;

Think Him not distant,
 Meditate on His Name and thou shalt obtain happiness.
 The Supreme Being who created the vesture of the world to behold it.
 Seeth, tasteth and knoweth everything ;
 He is contained within and without the world.
 Behold Him without thee, as He is within thee; there is none other.

In monotheism, the fourth fundamental belief is that God is formless. But here two views are possible: (1) God is immanent in the universe of souls and matter. So the universe including the souls and the material world is His form, image, picture, symbol, representation, though He is *Nirakara* or formless. (2) God is immanent in the universe of souls and matter, yet He is *Nirakara* or formless; and neither the immaterial souls, nor the material objects are actually His forms, images, pictures, symbols, representations.

Guru Nanak, subscribing to the second view, is at the same time very careful in pointing out that, though God is formless and the universe of souls and matter is not actually His form, that does not in any way detract from the glory and greatness of the world. A single drop of water, for example, cannot in any way reflect the great and glorious sun, and so be its image, yet who is not enamoured of such a golden drop, shining and smiling in the benign sunshine? In exactly the same manner, we are undoubtedly mere drops in the infinite Divine ocean, yet we are not puny, not feeble, not negligible glory, His illimitable beauty, His indescribable bliss.

He who recognizeth God in himself and knoweth the secret of the Word shall be satisfied.

But when man recognizeth himself through the Guru's instruction, what more remaineth for him to do?

Why speak of meeting God? Man hath met Him already; but it is only on receiving the Word that he is satisfied.

The perverse obtain not understanding; separated from God, they suffer punishment.

The fifth fundamental characteristic of God is that He is by nature bestower. But why is He such a bestower? Because, as pointed out above, He is not a selfish Being. He is but a pure giver.

However, the bestowing of *kripa* or *dana* may be of two kinds:

(1) *Sahetuka* (or that based on reasons). That is here an individual soul, that follows the path of duty, prays for salvation, strives hard for carrying out His behests, naturally receives His blessings.

(2) *Nirhetuka* (or that based not on reasons or anything else, as understood ordinarily). Ordinarily, as pointed out above, the reasons are from the side of the supplicating individuals themselves, viz. their good deeds, which deserve such Divine favour, Divine blessings, Divine gifts according to the ordinary codes of religion and ethics. But here there is no question of *deserving*, but rather the question of *needing*; and that is why this is called *nirhetuka* or without reasons.

According to Guru Nanak, God is a bestower in the second, rather than in the first sense.

Good deeds, to be really good; must be absolutely unselfish, that is, without any desire for fruit or result of any kind whatsoever. Therefore, as soon as the performer of good deeds expects anything in return, mundane or extramundane, he ceases to be a real performer of such good deeds. To make this clear, God purposely makes His own grace, His own blessing, His own gifts independently of the so-called good deeds, the idea being that such performers of good deeds must learn to act without any selfish motives, and simply for the sake of duty. Here we have the ideal of *niskama-karma* which forms the very basis of Indian ethics.

Again, God is merciful by nature, and His merciful nature does not wait for any specific conditions for its manifestation. Hence it is God's compassionate nature that is everywhere manifesting itself for all, irrespective of merit or demerit. Just as the benign sun shines for all, for the big and beautiful lotuses as well as for the small and inconspicuous wild flowers so is God's mercy poured on all, on devotees as well as on non-devotees, on good-doers as well as on evil-doers.

As a matter of fact, if the Divine mercy be not according to one's deeds, but according to one's needs only, then it must, of necessity, be universal. Because all need Divine mercy and cannot live without it even for a single moment. And the only thing left for us is to realize this Universal Mercy that is there for us, for all, from all eternity; realize the same through *mantra-tantra-vrata*, through *tapasya-sadhana-aradhana*, through *jnana-bhakti-karma*, spiritual knowledge, spiritual devotion, spiritual striving. For example, the benign sun is there, yet you have to open your eyes to see it.

A brief summary is given here of Guru Nanak's doctrine of God. Of the numerous characteristics of God, only five have been chosen here: (1) God as One; (2) God as the Creator; (3) God as both transcendent and immanent; (4) God as formless; (5) God as a bestower. But these five, in fact, represent five of His most fundamental characteristics, especially in relation to the universe of souls and matter. Thus the first and most fundamental question that we ask here is: Is there anything as unitary in the midst of all apparent multiplicity, one amongst the apparent many? The answer is that there is One, only One; and so, He alone can stand as the connecting link between the apparently numerous different things. He alone can be their creator, preserver, and destroyer. He is both inside and outside the universe of souls and matter. But though inside or immanent in this universe of souls and matter, He is yet formless. Finally, from the standpoint of the individual souls or *jivas*, He is a benevolent deity who is constantly giving Himself away to others.

XVI

SOME RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS IN HINDUISM AND SIKHISM: GURU AND SABDA

SOBHARANI BASU

My aim in this paper is to study a few prominent religious concepts common to Hinduism and Sikhism. The purpose of such study is to become acquainted with the religious thought, idea or need which underlies the group of corresponding data. Its purpose is not to determine their greater and smaller religious value but to study the religious phenomena as concepts to gain an overall view of the ideas and motives which are of decisive importance in the religions of man. In other words, my task here is to describe the essence of religion (in the present context of Sikhism and Hinduism) by determining the spiritual aspect of religion—religion's distinctive nature.

Sikhism practically is not an absolutely new religion, though it has a new drive and orientation. Its basic convictions are drawn both from Hinduism and Islam. It is, indeed, an outstanding example of "conscious syncretism." It is new in the sense that its founder, Guru Nanak, who was charged with a mission to redeem the lost world with the True Name of God lived only five centuries ago.

In this paper, I shall deal mainly with two cardinal concepts, viz., the *Guru* and the *Sabda*.

To a student of practical mysticism, it is well known that every man, be he in any state, is in a state of bondage. This is as true of a layman in the street as it is of the most recondite scholar sitting in his private chamber. This bondage consists of the fact that the self of the man is not a free agent. It is subject to the limitations imposed upon it not only by the external world but also by the psycho-physical organism which he carries within himself. This happens to him in every birth and on every plane without exception. These limitations are universal and they have their origin in the fact that man does not know his true self and falsely imagines himself to be a being of a particular grade under a particular name. His true nature is unknown to him and it is for this reason that he begets *karma* and by virtue of its powers transmigrates from life to life, sometimes enjoying in heaven and sometimes suffering in hell. His true nature is divine and is free from ignorance and all egocentric complexes consequent upon it. He does not know when and how he forgot himself and began to be carried away in the stream

of time. But wise men say that it is possible for him to regain his previous knowledge and attain to his real and immortal status.

The Hindu religion, in fact every religion worth the name, teaches the way of the self's attainment of knowledge and recovery of its lost position. In Hinduism, as in Buddhism and Jainism, we have elaborate discussions on the problem. In Hinduism, the Vedic and Tantric lines, in spite of their different approaches, have tackled the problem in a closer manner. The Tantras of Sivas, Saktas and Vaisnavas, despite their different outlooks, have a common background in this respect.

Speaking briefly, we may refer to the paths recommended by the various systems. *Karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti* have their respective places in these systems but in all, the variations, the practical *sadhanas* have to be conducted under the guidance of a competent master, technically known as the *guru*. It is from the *guru* that the light of knowledge proceeds and illuminates the darkened soul. During the ascent of the human soul, it has to pass through stages known as *karma* or action, *jnana* or knowledge, *bhakti* or divine love or devotion. Each of these forms is a kind of yoga and has its own contribution to make, resulting in the progress of the soul. The *guru* is really a representative of the Divine Lord. Although one with Him, he appears to be different for conferring grace, and for this reason the human *guru*, in spite of his limitations as a man, has to be looked upon as the representative of God.

Really speaking, each and every human being, as such, cannot claim to be a *guru*. He has to realize himself as one with the Divine with all his knowledge and powers capable of reclaiming his soul. Until and unless he is capable of attaining this perfection through union with the Divine, he cannot function as the agent of God, capable of infusing power and spirituality into the soul of his disciple. In the Hindu Scriptures, we learn the *guru pranama* in the following couplet:

*akhandamandalakaram vyaptam yena caracaram
tatpadam darsitam yena tasmai srigurave namah.*

This means that the true *guru* is he who reveals the entire reality as an integrated whole. He infuses powers into the soul of the seeker who, with the help of this power and through his personal exertion, rises to higher and higher realization. It is also said in the Hindu Scriptures:

*ajnantimiracchanna jnananjanasalakaya
caksurunmilitam yena tasmai srigurave namah.*

It is the *guru* who dispels the darkness of ignorance of the disciple by his power of knowledge. It is he who opens his eye of knowledge.

This initial outlay represents the invaluable gift of the *guru* to his disciples. The seeker has to exert himself no doubt and has to perform all actions necessary for his development, but he cannot start on his journey without something positive in the form of blessings from the "master." All the religious systems insist on the great importance of a *guru*, without

whom no progress on the spiritual path is ever possible. The *guru* appears in the form of a man but in reality he is neither a man nor a woman nor even a god. He is above all of them and is the embodiment of Divine grace.

The *guru* dispels (*samadhana*) the shadows of doubts (*samsaya*) arising in the mind of the disciple.

gurostu maunam vyakhyanam sisasyastu chinna-samsaya.

The *guru* is the spiritual guide who initiates the novice. It is he who, by initiation, ushers the devotee into the spiritual birth, giving him a second birth (*dvija*). The *guru* imparts his knowledge to the disciple through a potent word or words, technically called *sabda*.

A question may naturally arise in the minds of persons not initiated into the secrets of *Sabda-Yoga* regarding the true significance of the *sabda* in esoteric *sadhana*. The great teachers of mankind, even of the modern age, including the great Guru Nanak and his followers, the saint Kabir and other members of the *sant* fraternity had said much which is worth the attention of great thinkers. The significance of *Vak-Yoga* or *Sabda-Yoga* or *Surat-Sabda-Yoga* is perhaps all known to you. I wish to speak a few words in this connection on what Tantras teach. The Tantras say that, speaking generally, the principle of sound is to be understood in a fourfold sense. Sound or *sabda* is otherwise known as *vak*, usually classified into four categories, viz., *para*, *pusyanti*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari*.

Para Vak is the Divine Power and is one with the Supreme Reality or what is called *Parama Siva* in Tantric literature. It is known as *Sabda Brahman* in Vedic language and is distinguished from the Ultimate Reality called *Para Brahman* and yet the two are identical.

The human being who realizes his unity with the *Para Vak* is one with the Supreme Reality in its perfect form. He is then an emancipated person, having a divine character. When he feels compassion for men in misery, he is overwhelmed with an urge to help and regenerate them. This he does by imparting the essence of the Divine Power as a free gift to mankind. The power is communicable through a particular medium, viz., the audible sound or *sabda* or the *vaikhari vak*.

Vaikhari is a sound in the human language. It is spoken by people and through it they express their thoughts. It does not matter whether it is connected with a particular language. What is really significant is the fact that it is generated under the action of external air through the vocal organ and is articulate (*varnatmaka*). It is through this kind of human language that intercommunication between man and man is possible. The *yogins* are of opinion that the *vaikhari* or articulate sound is the outermost expression of *vak* and embodies the external world—*vaikhari viswavigraha*.

This *vaikhari vak* is conveyed by the *sadguru*, who is at one with the Divine, to his disciple. This process is technically called *diksa* or "initiation" (also called baptism in Christianity). It is said:

*diyate jnanasadbhavaḥ kṣiyate paśuvasana
danakṣapanaśanyukta dikṣa tena kīrtita.*

By which knowledge is "given" and lower impulses and desires are weakened — this kind of the action of "giving" and "weakening" is called *diksa*. This sound or *sabda* heard by the disciple is apparently an audible one but in reality it is part of the Divine power imparted to him by the *sadguru* or master who is in union with Divine. The disciple receives the audible sound through his auricular organ and has to keep it confined within himself as a great secret (*parama gupta*). He is required to convert the sound into an energy called *cit sakti*, or energy of consciousness as it were, through a process which is just opposite to the one through which he receives it.

This power comes down to the level of outward sense-organ through the medium of *vaikhari*. It is a process of descent. The disciple has to bring it upwards in a process of ascent. This dual process of descent and ascent brings about illumination in the disciple.

During the latter part of this process, the disciple has to repeat (*japam*) the sound with intense attention to it in consequence of which the articulate sound (either in the form of *mantra* or *sabda* or *nam*) begins to dissolve. The articulate sound becomes changed into an inarticulate sound (*dhanyatmaka*) flowing as *nada* within the inner space of the heart.

There is thus a triple process in the "conversion" of an ordinary sound into "pure energy of consciousness" (*cit sakti*). The beginning of the process is like a melting process (*druti*) which converts the *vaikhari vak* into the *madhyama*. The *vaikhari* sound is said to be the cause of all *vikalpas* or distractions of mind. But when *nada* appears, all *vikalpas* and mental complexes vanish altogether. The first state of the ascent is marked by this flowing sound or *nada*. The second is marked by a further stage—a stage of illumination. *Nada* is converted into *jyoti* or light. The inner space of the heart is filled with light. This is called mental purification (*citta parisuddhi*). This illumination or glorification of mind is followed by the "dawn" (*usa*) of pure effulgence. The mind is now about to lose itself. It is on the verge of arriving at what we have named the *pasanti vak*. It is in this stage that true realization takes place. The disciple is now on a level with the master. It is just below the Divine Reality. In this stage what is technically known *siddhi* or perfection arises. *Maya* disappears with its illusions. Man is at one with God. The "pupil" reaches the level of the "master." Beyond this, there is nothing but the Supreme Reality Itself which is called *para vak* or *Parameswara* (as One). The true *sabda* is thus

ultimately the Supreme Reality Itself. To the Hindu, it is the essence of the *Veda*, whether conceived as *agama* or *nigama*.

This is *sabad* or *sabda* proper, according to Guru Nanak also, which we shall discuss in the following pages.

Some vital questions arise in the mind of a student of Sikhism: How does God communicate with an unregenerate man? How is a man, steeped in utter despair and darkness and drowned deep in ignorance, delivered? Sikhism is based on the pivot called the True Name (*Sati Nam*) round which move two fundamental concepts, viz., the *guru* and the *sabda*. The role of the *guru* is of primary importance in leading the unregenerate man from darkness to light.

The unregenerate man is in bondage because of his limitations of body and mind, his dominant impulse being his egoism which Guru Nanak calls *haumai* or self-centredness. The unregenerate man is under the control of this *haumai* which binds him to the cycle of transmigration. In Christian theology, this *haumai* is expressed as "turning away from God" and inclining towards worldly sense-objects and their enjoyment.¹ When man is egocentric and is under evil impulses he rotates on the wheel of life and death. He generates *karma* under the influence of six passions (*sadripu*, viz., *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsyaraya*) and suffers endlessly because of them. He is called *manmukh* or self-willed and is an unregenerate man suffering the consequences of the *haumai* present in him.

"The *manmukh's* mind is clogged with falsehood. He does not meditate on (the Name of) God and so suffers penalties of sin."² Being vested with egoism and self-centredness, he fails to perceive the true nature of salvation.

"The self-centred man from the start has taken the wrong path. He has given himself up to greed, to attachment and pride. He has wasted his days in wrangling, and has not meditated on the Word. The Lord seems to have deprived him of everything. His speech is sinful. The world's wealth cannot satisfy him; desire still burns fiercely within him. And his ignorance is as the darkness of a cave. Nanak says: Comradeship with such self-centred people who care for nothing but the pleasure of this world is best brought to an end."³

Being separate from God, the unregenerate man forgets the true Name and falls in the clutches of *maya*.

It is the *guru* or *sadguru* through whom God reveals the Truth. For Nanak the Word or *Sabda* is the true revelation of God and through the *Sabda*, the *guru* communicates with the unregenerate man and takes him across the ocean of suffering (*dukhasagar*).

The concept of Truth (*sach*) is an all-embracing one in Sikhism as well as in Hinduism. Man is released from the shackles of *maya* when he knows and experiences the Truth as the nature of the Ultimate Reality and it is God who reveals His own nature through a *guru*, and the *guru*, in

turn, initiates the disciple and converts him into a new living being. To Nanak, the *Guru* himself is God and the *Sabda* or his word is the Divine Word. In Sikhism, the primary importance is placed on the doctrine of the *guru*. He is the sole communicator of the Divine Truth, an exemplar, a guide and a pathfinder (*pathapradarsaka*). But who is a *guru*? Is he only a particular person meant to guide only? We all know from a historical study of Sikhism that there were ten personal *Gurus* from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh and, after the death of the last, the personality of the *Guru* was merged into the Holy Scripture, the *Guru Granth*. What is the significance of the *guru*?

In the Hindu traditions, both with the Vaisnavas and the Saivas, we have seen that a *guru* is one who imparts spiritual knowledge and power by transmitting from his own and occupies an exalted position and is the source of esoteric knowledge (*rahasya*).

The *guru* is an object of devotion and his voice is the voice of God. In the case of Kabir, it was the inner voice which enlightened his soul and this inner voice is spiritual in character arising from the inmost core of his heart—a voice which worked as the link between him and God. The same strain is also found in Guru Nanak. With him too, the *guru* is identified with God. He says:

He for whom we searched throughout the universe,
Him we found by means of the guru. It is the True Guru
Who brings us into union with the Lord.⁴

With Guru Nanak, the *guru* is the *sabda*, the word. He says: "The Word is Guru."⁵ "It is only through the Word that I dwell on Him and so through the Guru the fire of *haumai* is extinguished."⁶ It is evident from his statement that the *Guru* is God and the *Guru* is the voice of God, the *Guru* is the Word, the Truth of God. The *Guru* is identified with the Word.

The same idea is found in Christian theology. About the divinity of Jesus Christ it is said: "In the beginning there was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Jewish-Christian Logos-Doctrine is the extension of this concept of the Word.

A true *guru* helps mankind to shed the slough of despair. The Sikhs do not believe in incarnation. According to Sikhism, "the true *guru* is the servant of God."

"God is not limited to any one incarnation, but He sends His messengers from time to time to lead struggling humanity towards Him. It is the law of the spiritual world that whenever evil and ignorance darken human affairs, morality and wisdom will come to our rescue." (See the *Bhagavad-Gita* IV, 7-8).

The *Guru* is the indwelling Divine who teaches all through the gentle voice of conscience. He appears outside in human form to those who

crave for a visible guide. The enlightener is the inner self. Nanak is for spiritual effort. Faith in the Guru is adopted both by the Hindus, and by the Muslim Sufis. The latter emphasize the need of a religious teacher, *pir*, to guide the initiate in his prayer and meditation. The *gurus* are human, not divine. They are not to be worshipped. Guru Gobind Singh says, "Whosoever regards me as the Lord, shall be damned and destroyed... I am but the servant of God."⁷

A true *guru* leads a man on the right path; he has recognized the Supreme Truth (*Sach*); he is the messenger of Truth.

On encountering the Guru, every thirst is slaked.
The body and the mind are refreshed.
Hail, all hail, to the Guru, the Truth-incarnate, in
Whose just eyes all are alike.
Hail, all hail, to the True Guru, free from enmity,
Above the need of praise or the fear of calumny.
Hail, all hail, to the True Guru, the Wise,
Who hath God's Light within him.
Hail, all hail, to the True Guru, the Eternal,
Whose goal is beyond our grasping.
Hail, all hail, to the True Guru, the True,
Who confirmeth me in the Truth.
Hail, all hail, to the True Guru, saith Nanak.
It is he who imparteth the Word.⁸

* * *

Without the Guru there is no access to the company of the *sants* ;
Without the Guru, one blindly engages in futile endeavour ;
But with the Guru one's mind is purified,
For its filth is purged by the Word.⁹

* * *

When the True Guru is merciful, faith is perfected ;
When the True Guru is merciful, there is no grief ;
When the True Guru is merciful, no sorrow is known ;
When the True Guru is merciful, the love of God is enjoyed ;
When the True Guru is merciful, there is no fear of death ;
When the True Guru is merciful, there is eternal peace ;
When the True Guru is merciful, the nine treasures are obtained ;
When the True Guru is merciful, one blends with the True One ;¹⁰

Guru Nanak's *guru* was not a person in the ordinary sense of the term. Guru Nanak received the cup of the Name from the true court of God. This is mentioned in the *Janamsakhi* when dealing with the incident in the Bein river. Guru Nanak says: "*Niranjan* is the essence of all and His light shines in all places. All is God and nothing is separate from him. He who is the infinite, supreme God is the *Guru* whom Nanak has met."¹¹ The *guru* as a guide appears at the proper time to awaken the inner soul of the aspirant. In the words of a *sant*: "The seed of spirituality which is already in the soil can only flower and give fruit when the *guru* like a cloud comes and rains a timely shower of his blessings."¹²

Guru Nanak emphasized the efficacy of the *sabda* as the vehicle for the transmission of spirituality to the Sikh (etymologically one who learns "from the mouth of the *guru*" the truths revealed to the *Guru* by God).

The word *sabda* has been used by the *Siddhas* and specially by the *Nathasampradaya*. There it refers to the mystical sound called *anahad sabda* or simply *anhat*, unstruck sound or soundless sound. Here I may refer to what is called *Kundalini Yoga* and the place of *Sabda* in it. As preached in the literature on *Hatha Yoga* by the *Nathas* and also in the *Tantras*, the Serpentine power (*kundalini-sakti*) existing in the coiled form, when dormant in the lowest bodily centre, is the source of all spiritual energy. Until this power is roused into activity from its sleeping condition, it is not possible to have a spiritual vision at all. The usual life of a man with all its varied activities is as good as a dream in which the truth is hidden and a phantasmagoria of illusion passes in review before the eyes of the dreamer. The world in its materiality is presented as an objective reality different in essence from the percipient subject. As soon as the coiled power stirs up and begins to course along the central track of *susumna*, the world vanishes from sight and even from memory and a new world of light and colour rises into view — a world which is no longer material and hardened as before but an ethereal realm of super-physical forces tending to become more and more self-conscious as the *yogin* advances upwards from centre to centre. In the *Ajna Cakra*, the mind becomes concentrated, as also the heart. The next upward movement leads it up through a state of perfect self-knowledge to the *Sahasrara* where the Universal Lord with His power is actually seen. Beyond *Sahasrara*, *maya* disappears and the *yogin* becomes established in *Brahman*.

The up-rush of *kundalini* is accompanied with a sound which is as it were accessible to the external sense. It is the Eternal Sound which functions in the deepest recesses of all creation, in the heart of the universe and does not resemble the physical sound, as known to us. This is called *anhata dhvani* or unstruck sound, as referred to in this paper already and it is called *anahada* in the writings of the *sants*. It corresponds to *Sabda Brahma* or *Pranava* or *Omkara* of the Vedic mystics.

The Eternal unstruck sound conceals the light which, in its turn, contains the germ of the mind. As soon as this mind is dissolved, lo, the immensities of the Absolute alone remain.

A contrast is found here in Sikhism. With Guru Nanak there is no *kundalini*, no *ida*, *pingala* and *susumna*, no *chakra*, no *pranayam*. . . He only naturalized these words. As a matter of fact, whenever such words are used, they refer only to the *yogin's* usage and practice.

Guru Nanak's emphasis on the Word is only as the vehicle of revelation. Its function is only to provide means whereby man may secure

release from his bonds and so attain union with God and be free from misery and bondage. By meditating on the Word, he will lose his *haumai* and be nearer to God. Union with Him will make him free from transmigration. He goes beyond the range of time (*kala*) and becomes what is called *Akal Purusa*. Such a Word is the be-all and end-all of man's journey towards the Eternal Truth. "God is revealed through the true Word (*Sabda*)."¹³ "By the Guru's guidance, he obtains salvation and is no longer bound (to the wheel of transmigration). By meditating on the Word, by (repeating) the Name of God, he is saved."¹⁴ "Without the Word one is condemned to wander. Worldly afflictions cause many to sink (in the ocean of existence). O man, apply your understanding to the Word (*Sabda*) and cross over. He who has not followed a *guru* and so has not understood the Divine Name, (such a person) continues to transmigrate."¹⁵ To quote again: "O Nanak, the Lord, the true Creator, is known by means of the Word."¹⁶

We see now that the two key-words, viz., *guru* and *sabda*, play the most important part and they are often spoken together and are associated together as *guru ka sabda*—the Guru's word or simply *Guru sabda*, the *Guru-Word*. They are, in fact, identical.

The Word is the manifestation of the living energy; it is, indeed, the power of God—called the "Substantial Word" by St John of the Cross.¹⁷ In Kabir's words, it is called *Sara Sabda*. Kabir says:

*sab ka adi sabd ko jano,
anta savi ka sabd pichhano.*

"Know ye the *Sabda* to be the beginning and end of all." *Sabda* helps by being instrumental in awakening the intuitional faculty. In other words, *sabda* is the means or the way, the *Tao*, in the words of Laotze, the *Tariqat* in Sufism. *Sabda* is the Goal of God, the Ultimate Reality, the *Param Padam*, the *Haqiqat* in Sufism.

The Sikh concept of the *sabad* may be compared with the Logos of the Christians. The universe is created by the Will (*ichha* or *mauja*) of God, or *Hukam* (command) in Sikh terms. It is by the *Hukam* of God that the world came into being. We find the corresponding ideas in other religions, too. It is said in the Bible: "Let there be light and there was light."¹⁸ In the words of St John: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things are made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."¹⁹ In Islam we find that everything came into existence when God uttered the word *kun*²⁰ meaning "be." This Islamic conception of the word *kun* led to the creation of the universe. In the Vedas it is said: *Eko-aham vahu syam* "I am one, let Me be many." It is also said:

*om atma va idameka evagra asit
nanyat kincanamisat sa iksata lokantu sria iti*

In the beginning, this was but the Absolute Self alone. There was nothing whatsoever that winked. He thought, let me create the worlds.²¹

The Word in Sikhism carries the meaning of what God says. God through the *guru* imparts the Word. It is called *Guruvani* or *Guropadesa*. Word is not only primarily an incentive to inward perception but it is employed as an external aid to help Divine knowledge and union with God. Truth as communicated by the *Guru* is referred to as the Word whereas Truth, as received and meditated on by the believer, tends to be expressed in terms of the Name (*Nam*). *Guru ka sabda* and *nam japna* (repetition of the Name) or *nam simirana* are of vital importance in Sikhism. The *Sabda* is the Divine Word and *Nam* expresses the Divine qualities. Word and Name are synonymous, as both are the expressions of Truth (*Sach*). Name also signifies the essence of God and names His qualities. In Sufi terminology, the former refers to the *dhat* and the latter to the *sifat* aspects of God. In Sikhism, the essence of God is *Sati Nam*, all that God is. The *guru's* voice can only be heard by God's grace (*nadar*). God expresses through a *guru* the Word and by His Grace, the *Sikh* (the disciple) understands it and attains the union. The *Sikh* repeats the *Nam* (*japna*), remembers (*simiran*) the Name and the *mantra* and thereby enables himself to be a pathfarer (a *salik* in Sufism) in the spiritual voyage. *Guru Nanak* further emphasizes the fact that the journey will be easier, if it is pursued with "singing the glory of God" in a musical tune in the company of the true believers (*satsangis*)—*Binu satsang viveka na hoi*. This "repeating and singing in company" are also found as *dhikr* in Sufism and *kirtana* in the devotional practice of Hinduism.

Guru Nanak preached monotheism. Perhaps he was impressed with the rigid and uncompromising monotheism of Islam and Judaism. To make it more central, he starts in the *mul mantra* of the *Guru Granth* with the numerical I (*Ek*). The *Upanisad* also declares: *Ekam Brahma divitiyo nasti*—"Brahma is One, there are no two believing in One Reality." *Guru Nanak's* contribution lies in reconciling the opposites between the personal and the impersonal, and transcendence and immanence of God and even going beyond both. The Eternal Truth is *Niranjan*, infinite—beyond human conception. Yet He is revealed through His creation, and through His grace to anyone who seeks Him through devotion. He is *Abinasi* (indestructible), *Anadi* (beginningless), *Akal* (beyond time), *Acala* (wholly constant, static) at the same time always in a state of being in perpetual flux or dynamic (*sacala*). He is also wholly detached (*Alipt*) and Eternally Immutable. He is the Formless One, uncreated, unborn, never incarnated—the unfathomable (*agah*) and indescribable (*akaih, akath, alakh*).

Guru Nanak further emphasizes the importance of human effort (*prusokara*) on the part of the individual, but it is God who is really responsible for the union between man and Him—the crown of his

salvation. "Man has to participate in which lies his release and union." "Nanak, all we receive is by the grace of the Beneficent One." Guru Nanak did not believe in idol-worship and he denounced image-worship like Kabir. Kabir says: "If God is a stone, I will worship a mountain." Again, Guru Nanak's another great contribution lies in seeing the unity between the two living religions of India. He strove to bring the Hindus and the Muslims together. His teaching is the fountain of two cardinal truths of these religions, viz., the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. His life and teachings are a symbol of harmony. Sri Aurobindo says: "All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony." Guru Nanak is a bridge between two shores of the river of unity. He is described as:

*Guru Nanak Shah Fakir,
Hindu ka Guru, Musalman ka Pir.*

Guru Nanak's famous theory of five *Khands* — man's ascent in stages to the Ultimate God is explained in his *Japji*. These five *khands* are the stages of spiritual progress of the aspirant. In short, the first, the *Dharm* or *Dharma Khand* represents the law of cause and effect; the second the *Gian Khand* or *Jnana Khand* represents the widening of understanding, also promoting the weakening of the self-centredness; the third, the *Saram* or *Sarama Khand* is the realm of spiritual effort or humility or surrender; the fourth the *Karm* or *Karma Khand* is the one in which the aspirant enjoys the fruit of his action through action, i.e., his faithful practice of *Nam Simiran*; the fifth and the last is *Sach* or *Sat* or *Satya Khand*, the Realm of Truth, the indwelling place of the Formless One — a state of unity, a state of *Ahad*, the One in Sufism, *Tadekani* in Hinduism. It is a state where I and Thou vanish, a state where neither I is there, nor thou, nor both. In the words of Abhinava Gupta, a great Kashmiri mystic poet:

*Tvam tvamevahan tvamevasi na casmyaham
Aham tvamityubhau. . .
Aham tvam tvamaham deti bhinnata navayoh kyacid*

Thou art Thyself alone: so I am myself alone. Thou alone art, I am not.
I am Thyself and Thou art myself — between us there is no difference.

In the *Yoga-Vasista*, we also find different levels of the *yogi's* ascent called *yoga - bhumis*. The highest state, called by Guru Nanak the state of *Sach*, is a state where the seeker is face to face with the sought, the Divine Order (*Hukam*). "As the *Hukam*, so too the deed." It is the state ineffable. "To describe it, Nanak, is as hard as steel." It is a state of man's final journey — his ascent to God where he enjoys union with Him, ending his transmigration. In Guru Nanak's words, it is *sachi samauna* where the individual *atma* dissolves in the *Paramatman* — a state beyond the three *gunas* (*trigunatita*), the fourth called *turiya* by the Vedantins and *Param Padam* by the Vaisnavas.

God in the form of Guru descends, so that the *guru* helps the *sisya*, in ascending to the State of Divinity (*Sati Nam*). God descends and becomes man, so that man ascends to become God. God through the *guru* speaks the Word, so that man hears (*sravana*), repeats (*japam*), remembers (*simiran*) and by doing so enjoys the unitive state of bliss (*anand*)—a state, ineffable.

The teachings of Guru Nanak vibrate in resonance with those of Hinduism.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. But there is a world of difference between Christian conception of *sin* and the Sikh conception of *haumai*. Sin is "original" and universal in Christianity; but *haumai* is limited to the individual.
2. *Asa* 24, *Guru Granth*, p. 356.
3. *Var Gauri*, *Guru Granth*, p. 316.
4. *Sri Rag*, *Guru Granth*, p. 20.
5. *Guru Granth*, p. 943.
6. *Siddh Gosti*, *Guru Granth*, p. 943.
7. *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, Introduction, p. 20.
8. *Slok Vadhik*, *Guru Granth*, p. 1421.
9. *Basant*, *Guru Granth*, p. 1170.
10. *Var Majh*, *Guru Granth*, p. 149.
11. *Sorathi*, *Guru Granth*, p. 599.
12. P. D. Barthwal, *The Nirguna School of Hindi Poetry*, p. 144.
13. *Sorathi*, *Guru Granth*, p. 597.
14. *Gauri*, *Guru Granth*, p. 152.
15. *Sri Rag*, *Guru Granth*, p. 19.
16. *Dhanasari Chhant*, *Guru Granth*, p. 688.
17. Such words are described in the work of St. Teresa's and the account is summed up by R. A. Vaughan in his *Hours with the Mystics*, Vol. II, Book IX, Chap. 2.
18. The Bible, Genesis of Moses, Chap. 1, 3.
19. The Bible, The Gospel of St John, Ch. 1, 1-3.
20. The Quran, II, III.
21. *The Aitareya Upanisad*, I, 1.

XVII

THE SECULAR RELIGION OF GURU NANAK

JOHN B. CHETHIMATTAM

"He did not teach anything new, but whatever he said bore the impress of originality and displayed the genius of a master-mind," says G. C. Narang, evaluating the religious contribution of Guru Nanak. A genius does not live up in the clouds. But, living right on the solid ground he sees more things than ordinary men, goes deeper into the meaning of things and events he experiences and presents a more comprehensive and unified vision. Guru Nanak lived in the midst of the people; he took a comprehensive view of the problems, struggles and aspirations of his contemporaries; he saw a deeper meaning in their preoccupations and formulated a religious outlook that extended far beyond his times into the future.

He lived at one of the most turbulent stages of Indian history, when the common people were subjected to the most unreasonable upheavals and hardships. In all that turmoil, when all external structures of religion seemed to crumble down and become totally inefficient, he discovered a deeper religion in the very ordinary life of the people and in the solution to their most commonplace problems.

Guru Nanak born in the Punjab identified himself with the people there. We can say today with a certain amount of satisfaction that this prosperous and free Punjab of our day is what Guru Nanak longed to build up, and his farsighted efforts contributed in no small measure to make it what it is today in spite of all the convulsions it had to pass through during these five hundred years from the birth of the Guru.

Punjab was a miniature world in all its confusion and conflict. The ancient Indus Valley settlers and the conquering Aryans, and after them the Persians, Greeks, Huns, Arabs, Mongols and Turks, all found their way to the heart of India through the Punjab. It was the place where each one of them fixed for a time his settlement and laid the foundation of his kingdom. There every one of them left remnants of his ancient customs and traditions as well as his progeny. New settlers pushed out the old, and scattered them into the Rajasthan desert; but these latter always tried to go back to their older possessions and to live side by side with the conquerors and thus created a mixed population.

The two major religious traditions of India, Hinduism and Islam, met together, fought against each other and finally came to live side by side

in the Punjab. But the people whom each tried to win for itself was neither fully Hindu nor fully Muslim. A majority of the population should have traced some sort of an ancestral relationship to the Hindu tradition. But when Guru Nanak appeared on the scene in the latter part of the fifteenth century there was little left there of the Hindu organization. The last of the Hindu kings of the Punjab, Anangapal was overthrown more than four hundred years earlier, in 1021. The Afghans and the Turks who established their kingdom in his place had very little to substitute for a true religious culture. Mahmood of Ghazni and those who followed him appealed to the Prophet Mohammad and the Quran only as a prop for their political might.

Hence when the young Nanak emerging from his three days of spiritual retreat taken off from his daily work at the stonehouse of Nawab of Sultanpur Lodi, cried out, "There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman," he was voicing the deep feeling of millions of his countrymen. He realized that a nominal Hindu community squeezed between the Muslim forces operating from the two capitals of Kabul and Delhi had no external support to depend upon. Only the religion of the heart and the cult of the daily task could survive in such a situation.

Long before Guru Nanak, the Sufi saint Shaikh Farid had felt the same kind of isolation when the religious situation of peace and communal harmony was shattered by the destructive march of conquering armies:

I burn and writhe in agony,
I wring my hands in despair,
I am crazed with a longing for the Lord.

In the name of religion and the holy Law, death and ruin were sown everywhere. In such a situation, the only option was to fall back on the basic religiosity of man and seek God in secret:

Without the Lord how can one cheer?
Through His mercy does one meet Him.
The world is a deep and dark pit of sorrow.

* * *
O Shaikh Farid, awake,
Arise and think of Him.

Then a truly religious man had to ignore the misdeeds of others and love them without hatred or greed:

Note not with a black mark,
The ill deeds of thy neighbour,
Return not blow for blow,
Nay, kiss their feet, who smite thee
And go peacefully homeward.

Guru Nanak surely shared the same sentiments, when we recall that he secured these hymns of Farid from Shaikh Ibrahim, the twelfth successor of Farid. These hymns were later included in the *Guru Granth*.

Guru Nanak also wanted to build up his religion on this faith in the one Father of all:

There is one God,
Eternal Truth is His Name;
Maker of all things,
Fearing nothing and at enmity with nothing.

In him the differences and oppositions of Scriptures are dissolved:

The Vedas proclaim with one voice that He is boundless,
The Semitic Books mention eighteen hundred worlds,
But the Reality behind all is the one Principle.

The Vedas and the Puranas, and all the gods like Brahma and Indra and Siva, Siddhas and Buddhas all speak of this one God.

Guru Nanak well understood religion to be a human phenomenon. Though it deals with God, it is for the sake of man, for the attainment of his life's goal in God. Hence anything man did as religious practices had to be meaningful to him. Outdated and meaningless rituals and ceremonies were deadening the life of the people. What Guru Nanak wanted was a direct approach to God in the simplicity of the heart. He was baffled by the variety and complexity of religious views. Some emphasized the power of God, others His gifts, yet others His incomprehensible wisdom. Some dwelt upon the transcendence of God far removed from all creation, whereas others took delight in his presence. Guru Nanak rejoiced in the love of Truth Absolute: "O Nanak, this alone need we know that God being Truth is the one light of all." His basic intuition was: "There is one Truth, one bestower of life."

In Guru Nanak, the original simplicity and directness of Indian piety so well illustrated in the Indus Valley religious culture and in the Dravidian devotionism of the South reasserted itself. He knew that God did not need any temple, nor any special place to manifest His being and power. The Indus Valley civilization with its well-planned cities and ingeniously engineered amenities of city life does not seem to have felt the need to construct temples and altars. Invoking the Name of God was a custom common to both the Hindu Bhakti movement and the Muslim Sufi devotion. Guru Nanak gave great importance to the Name of the Most High: Harken to the Name of the Supreme, in simple loving devotion, place all trust in God, sing his praises in unity and harmony with other men; this was the substance of Guru Nanak's instruction. Simple openness to the grace of God is what is implied by "Harkening to the Name."

Harkening to the Name bestows
Truth, divine wisdom, contentment,
To bathe in the joy of the Name,
Is to bathe in the holy places.

* * *

By harkening to the Name,
Sorrow and sin are destroyed.

The Name represents the whole reality of the Divine. Guru Nanak applies this worship of the Name to all the concrete situations of human life. The secret of his success was that he could make religious truth a homely reality. By hearkening to the Name "the blind man sees his way," "impassable streams are forded," through it "the whole universe stands revealed," and one attains even the godliness of Siva, Brahma and Indra; one's vision, explores thereby planets, continents and the nether regions, and death itself is conquered.

The troubled times in which Guru Nanak lived exposed the emptiness of outmoded religious structures. Ordinary people could not find help in external authority, and institutional religion. When everything was in confusion and when the religious leaders who gave inspiration to religious practices were themselves struggling to preserve their existence, rituals and customs got loose from their ground and became meaningless establishments which provided a false security and a kind of neurotic escape from the hard realities of life. Pilgrimages, penances and other observances had lost their religious meaning and had become mere mechanical customs.

Guru Nanak set out on a pilgrimage of his own to desacralize these practices, and to educate the people on the basic religious values of life. Wearing a peculiar pilgrim garb, a combination of the dress of the Hindu sadhu and of the Muslim fakir he made an extensive tour of all the famous Hindu and Muslim places of pilgrimage, going far to the east into Assam and Bengal, to the south into Konkan and Malabar, and to the west up to Baghdad and Mecca. Everywhere he had one message: the unity of all religions, and the futility of ceremonial worship. His demonstration at Hardwar of splashing water to the west contrary to the common practice was meant to show the credulous public that the mere physical oblation of water did not avail the dead. To the *mulla* who remonstrated with him about his sleeping with his feet towards the Ka'ba, his characteristic reply was: "Please turn my feet in a direction where there is no God."

But Guru Nanak's iconoclasm did not end in an empty secularism. His goal was to deepen the religious experience of the people by liberating it from dead religious structures and bring about a greater commitment to the tasks of daily life. Hence he who discouraged all pilgrimage himself undertook a long pilgrimage visiting many holy places in quest of not idols and temples, but looking for people in order to instruct them and guide them. He made Kartarpur a pilgrim centre. When Guru Arjun built the Golden Temple at Amritsar, he was acting against the letter of the teaching of the Guru, but not against its spirit; it was not a place for idols and meaningless ritual, but for the gathering of the disciples, the living temple of humanity.

The central point of a secular religion is its deep humanism. It is in and through the service of men in sincere love that God has to be

approached. For Guru Nanak, religion was *sangat* and *pangat*, the community of the disciples, eating in the same row from the same community kitchen. To divide that common humanity on the lines of caste and class was a denial of religion. Hence Guru Nanak made participation in the common meal the condition for access to the Guru.

As a leader of the common people, Guru Nanak emphasized the role of the Guru in the community. The Hindu concept of Guru, the Sufi Pir, the Christian Spiritual Director and the Jewish Rabbi all designate a common need of all humanity for a spiritual guide. *Sikh* means *sishya* or disciple and the Sikh religion is the community of the disciples. As Sher Singh says, "The belief of unity in the plurality of the Gurus served a useful purpose in the development of Sikhism. But for this belief, there would have been no Sikh nation."

According to Guru Nanak, without the Guru there is no salvation: The word of the Guru is the inner music, and the highest Scripture; the Guru is at the same time Siva, Vishnu, Brahma and the Mother Goddess.

But the Guru is only a guide; he is to be consulted, not to be worshipped. He is not even a prophet like Muhammad: "At God's gate there is no room for a prophet," Guru Nanak told a Muslim. Hence all the ten Gurus of Sikhism constituted one voice, one guide. This impersonal aspect of the Guru made it possible for Guru Gobind Singh to transfer the permanent function to the *Guru Granth*, the eternal spiritual message.

If religion is for man, it has to embrace the whole man and cannot ignore his material needs. Religion has its obligations not up in the clouds but in the midst of everyday life. A truly religious man has to live in the midst of the common people ministering to their needs and facing their problems. Guru Nanak had very little appreciation for the life of the *siddhas* who forsook the world, oblivious of their social duties and obligations to their fellowmen: "The earth is all seized by sin," he complained: "The accomplished saints and sages are the *siddhas*, and they are hiding themselves in the recesses of the mountains. Who is there to save the world?"

When Guru Arjun died under torture, a victim to the suspicions of Emperor Jahangir, Guru Hargobind, his successor, found it necessary to protect his community with arms. With the formation of the Sikh army, the Guru had to assume the role of a military leader too, *Sacha Padashah*, the true emperor. Guru Gobind Singh instituted the *Khalsa*, the consecration of the élite of warriors to defend the community against the attacks of the enemies. This ceremony reminiscent of the traditional concentration of idols in temples implied that the real protectors of the people were not the mute idols in traditional places of worship but a band of courageous men religiously dedicated to the service of the community.

XVIII

GURU NANAK AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

FAUJA SINGH

Being both a product and a leader of the Bhakti movement, marking the history of early medieval India, Guru Nanak naturally had many things in common with the other members of the galaxy of *bhagats* and *sants* who flourished during this period. He shared with them the belief that ritualism, formalism or the mechanical performance of religious functions was not spiritually meritorious; that pretence or hypocrisy in matters religious was futile; and that the mode of worship which was not inspired by sincere love and devotion was useless. He also held in common with them the belief that the door of God's worship was open to all, irrespective of caste and creed. Like them, he too believed in the laws of *karma* and *junas*, meaning that human souls are subject to transmigration through a cycle of reincarnations on the basis of their performances while going through a given period of life. The positions of Guru Nanak and other leaders of the Bhakti movement on the subjects of *nadir* (Divine grace) and *mukti* (emancipation from the cycle of birth and death), were largely similar, if not identical. In the case of such *bhagats* (by some called *sants* by way of distinction from the rest) as Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, etc., whose hymns have been incorporated in the *Guru Granth*, the degree of affinity is still greater. Like Guru Nanak, they all believed in one Supreme Being or formless God and opposed idol-worship and *avatarvad* (the theory of reincarnated God). They addressed God by different names and complete devotion to Him constituted, according to them, the best form of religion. Their approach was broader and more independent of the prevalent orthodoxy. They had greater faith in their own religious experience than in the traditional ones, as handed down to them by the priestly classes. Of all these men of God, Kabir has been considered to be the closest to Guru Nanak. He speaks of *sahaj* as the highest state of spiritual attainment and advocates *jiwan mukti* (emancipation from all ills during one's lifetime) as the supreme criterion of one's spiritual progress in life. Neither the admission into *swarg* (heaven) nor the mere release from the cycle of birth and death is rated as a goal as high or as desirable as communion with God. All these concepts were very close to the thinking of Guru Nanak. In the hymns of Kabir incorporated in the *Guru Granth*, there are plenty of conceptual words which are also found in the hymns of

Guru Nanak: such as *nam-simran*, *guru*, *satguru*, *sabad*, *anahad sabad*, *sadhsewa*, *bhaobhagat*, *siftsalah*, *sunni*, *paramgat*, *hukam*, etc.

However, the affinities between Guru Nanak and other *sants* of the period do not go very far. In the case of some of the *bhagats*, their chief concern with worship remained personal salvation or mystic ecstasy. Where it went beyond the personal concern, there, too, it practically remained confined to the narrow sphere which was commonly reserved for religion in the then restricted sense. There were, no doubt, occasional references to caste arrogance, equality of all human beings, the high-handedness of the Brahmins, *qazis*, and *mullas*, etc., but the connotation in each case was almost always religious in the restricted sense rather than in the social sense. The social structure based on the caste-system was neither challenged, nor was the exploitation of the lower castes by the higher ones condemned. The Brahmin came in for severe criticism for his insistence on ritualism and formalism and for his intolerance of anyone who dared to find fault with his methods. As in the case of Kabir and Namdev, the criticism of the Brahmin rose in direct proportion to his high-handedness towards them. Similarly, the idea of equality of all was more in the nature of a protest against the Brahmanical ban on the lower castes being admitted to the rights of equality in religious worship than an attempt to eliminate the caste-system. The aggression of the *qazis* and *mullas* also, to which, comparatively, there are only a few references in the works of Kabir and Namdev, may best be understood in the light of their undue interference with the religious activities of non-Muslims. It must, however, be added that insofar as such ideas as these led to the loosening of rigours in the society, they paved the way for social reform by inculcating in the people a new spirit and a new angle of vision.

Unlike most of them, Guru Nanak possessed an acute awareness of the social situation in its religious as well as in its non-religious aspects. This is amply evident from his frequent references to the Brahmins, Siddhas and Nath-Jogis. The Brahmin laid more stress on ritualism and formalism than on the ideas underlying them. He was a staunch advocate of religious orthodoxy. He was also arrogant of his high caste and looked down upon those of the lower castes. Guru Nanak subjected the Brahmins to severe criticism for all such beliefs and practices, but his criticism did not end there, as it happened in most other cases. The Guru was greatly irked by the Brahmins' relentless advocacy of a rigid caste-system and their exploitation of, and oppression against, the low-caste people who were dubbed by them as *achhut* (untouchables, sometimes even unapproachables). How strongly he felt on this matter may be gauged from the following lines of his:

The wielders of dagger are the people who have the sacred thread round their necks (*Asa di Tar*).

With *tika* (the sacred mark) on their foreheads and *dhoti* wrapped round their loins and legs, they look pious, but in fact they are the world's butchers carrying daggers in their hands (*Asa di Var*).

The Guru went further and even exposed the hypocrisy of the Brahmin conducting himself in a shameless manner, devoid of all self-respect.

He has all the three symbols of a pious Hindu—*dhoti*, *tika* and *mala*—and yet he does not hesitate to feed on the crumbs of the *malechhas* (foreigners). Inwardly, he is a believer in Hindu worship, but outwardly he reads Muslim books and follows the ways of the Turks (*Asa di Var*).

This was not the way, the Guru believed, the Brahmins, who were supposed to be the leaders of the people, should conduct themselves. They had abandoned the path of truth, and little, by way of right leadership, could be expected of them.

In the case of the Siddhas and Yogis, Guru Nanak, like Kabir and a few other *bhagats*, took a serious notice of their insistence on *bhekh* (the outfit of a recluse) to the total or near exclusion of the substance underlying the *bhekh*, but whereas others stopped there, Guru Nanak went further and denounced the whole idea of retirement from worldly life. In one of his hymns he has said:

Yoga lies not in wearing patched garments, nor in carrying a staff, nor in smearing one's body with ashes, nor does it lie in wearing earrings, nor in cutting one's hair, nor in playing on a *singi* (a musical instrument). Living pure in the midst of the impurities of the world is the means by which one can attain the true yoga (*Suhi*, I).

Elaborating the idea he has said:

Only by service in the world can one get a seat of honour in the Lord's Court (*Sri Rag*, I).

Bhai Gurdas, the first biographer of Guru Nanak, makes the attitude of the Guru on this subject abundantly clear in the first of his *Vars*, while summarizing the discussions which took place between the Guru and the Siddhas at Achal Batala.

The Yogi Bhangarnath asked him, "Why have you put *kanji* in the milk? The milk in the pot has been spoilt and its churning produces no butter. Why have you put aside the ascetic's robe and adopted the ways of the world?"

Nanak replied, "Bhangarnath, your mother was a foolish woman. She did not know how to cleanse the container and through her foolishness the milk has been spoilt. You became an ascetic separating yourself from householders and then you go and beg at their doors."

The rejection by Guru Nanak of retirement from active worldly life automatically marked a departure from the old concept and institution of the fourfold division of life which gave an honoured place to *banprasth* and *sanyas*, that is to say, retirement to forests and the practice of asceticism. The Guru underlined the notion that a pious and noble life was not antithetical to a life of household responsibilities.

Guru Nanak's attitude towards the caste-system was radical and went far deeper than that displayed by most of the *bhagats*. We have already seen that he condemned the caste arrogance of the Brahmin and the exploitation of the lower castes by the upper castes. On the question of inter-caste relations, his sympathies were with the lower castes, as he has himself said:

There are the lowest men among the low-castes. Nanak, I shall go with them. What have I got to do with the great? God's eye of mercy falls on those who take care of the lowly (*Sri Rag*, I).

Guru Nanak considered caste of no avail and held that not birth but deeds determined one's merit:

Nonsense is the caste and nonsense is the grandeur of name and fame arising from it.

All creatures are under the protection of the same one God (*Var Sri Rag*, I).

However, such persons are rare in the world who, after being tested, have been gathered into (His) treasury; who have risen above *Varna* and are unpolluted by worldly greed and attachment (*Prabhati*, I).

The caste of a person is what he does.

In order to understand aright the social approach of Guru Nanak, it is important to know his ideas of the Supreme Being and the universe. He believed in the existence of one God and no other. He is the sole creator of the entire universe which not only sprang up from Him but which He also sustains and will last only as long as He wills it to last. He is within His creation and also without it; He is immanent and also transcendent. The world is a moral order (*dharmsal*) borne on the horns of a *dhaul dharm* (the bull of *dharma*), the offspring of *daya* (compassion), and is an expression of His *hukum* and is governed by His will. Though Guru Nanak recognized God as the only reality, he did not consider the world an illusion. He has said clearly in *Asa di Var*:

Real is Thy universe and real are all its regions. Real are Thy planets and real all their forms.

The world is represented by the Guru as the True One's abode and hence it is a reality, though the creation, as compared with the Creator,

is only a subordinate reality. From here the Guru proceeds to emphasize the moral and spiritual basis of the universe and of the human existence. It was this overall ideology which determined the Guru's outlook on the purpose and meaning of man's life.

Thus ethical values occupy a much more important place in the thinking of Guru Nanak than is the case with other leaders of the Bhakti movement. For those who were mystics immersed in the adoration of God or in His love had neither the time nor the urge to think of ethics which has relevance only in the domain of social relations. Even Kabir, who is close to Guru Nanak, speaks of ethical values more in the spirit of an effort for the realization of God than with a view to making the world a better place to live in. He often refers to the need of *man marna* or *man vas karna* (control of the mind or subjugation of the five evils), of the destruction of *haumai* (egoism), and asserts the equality of all human beings, but considered in the totality of his thinking, these things were only valued as aids to a devotee's strivings to realize God. Guru Nanak's approach in this connection is clear and positive. A few instances from his writings may illustrate the point:

Out of the cotton of compassion spin the thread of tranquillity. Let continence be the knot and virtue the twists thereon. O Pandit, if such a sacred thread there be with you, I shall wear it with pleasure. A thread so made will not break, will not get dirty, will not be burnt or lost.

Blessed are the people who have this kind of *janeu* around their necks (*Rag Asa, I*).

Let kindness be thy mosque, faith thy prayer-mat, true earnings thy Quran, industry thy circumcision and good conduct thy fast. That is the right way to be a Musalman (*Majh di Var, I*).

Guru Nanak regards truth as the sovereign virtue. He says in *Asa di Var*:

Truth is the panacea for all ills.

All the same, he considers truthful conduct even higher than truth.

Truth is higher than everything, but higher still is truthful conduct (*Sri Rag, I*).

Among the various ethical values stressed by Guru Nanak, justice was held to be of special importance. The absence of justice, i.e., injustice, was regarded as tyranny, and he not only condemned it, but also preferred to resist it rather than bow down before it. He criticized the *qazi* who took bribe and left justice unheeded.

The *qazi* holds a court of justice. He tells the beads of rosary and utters the name of God. But he accepts bribe and cares not for justice (*Var Ramkali, I*).

He found the rulers and their officials remiss in the proper performance of their functions, with the result that the people suffered great hardships. We give below a few quotations from his hymns:

Greed and sin have become the king and the minister. Falsehood is the local governor. Lust is the *naib* with whom consultations are held (*Far Asa*, I).

The kings are tigers and their officials are dogs who disturb the people without caring for their convenience. The officials cause wounds as if with claws. The blood and the flesh left behind are swallowed up by the dogs (*Far Asa*, I).

The *Kaliyuga* is a knife and the kings are butchers, justice has taken wing (*Far Majh*, I).

Babar invaded India during the time of Guru Nanak and committed great atrocities on the people. The Guru has called Babar's invasion the bridal procession of sin.

He (Babar) has rushed down from Kabul at the head of the marriage party of sin and plundered people by force (*Tilang*, I).

The victims of the invasion moved the Guru deeply and he said: "The terror of Babar is all around. Even the child is too scared to eat."

Guru Nanak has given a graphic picture of the deplorable lot of the people who suffered at the hands of the invaders. His heart melted with compassion and he gave vent to his sentiments thus:

Babar patronizes and protects Khurasan, whereas he terrorizes Hindustan. The *Yam* of the Mughal has been made to march upon the country and yet how strange that the Lord Creator takes no blame on Himself! The people were beaten mercilessly and they cried for help, but there is no effect on Thee. Thou art the Lord Creator of all people. I would not complain if a strong person beats another strong person, but what if a powerful lion pounces upon a herd of (defenceless) cows? Then, is it not the master who is to answer for such an injustice? (*Rag Asa*, 1).

The responsibility for tragic happenings was of the Lodhi rulers. Guru Nanak took a serious notice of their failure to come to the rescue of the people.

The jewel (of Hindustan) has been thrown away by the dogs (Lodhis) When they are dead and gone, none will remember them. (*Rag Asa*, I).

Although the Lodhis had their full share of the blame, the real cause of the tragedy lay deeper. The Guru has said in this connection:

The people to be dishonoured are first rendered characterless (*Asa*, I).

Both self-respect and duty are gone and the predominant attribute everywhere is falsehood (*Tilang*, I).

Guru Nanak recognized justice (*niyae*) as one of the most important attributes of the Supreme Being. The rulers owed their exalted position to God and were responsible to Him. They were required to govern their subjects with justice:

The kings must do justice and the educated must concentrate on truth. If they do not, they are liable to divine chastisement (*Rag Sarang, I*).

They, who confer authority on those who deserve not, are fools, and they, who accept it, are shameless. How can a mouse, dragging a winnowing-basket tied with a string to his waist behind him, enter a hole? Both will be destroyed; the consecrators and the consecrated (*Var Malar, I*).

But the people faced with the situation could not afford to be indifferent. Guru Nanak impressed upon them the value of self-respect and fearlessness. If a person leads a life devoid of self-respect, he says in *Var Majh*, all that he eats is unlawful for him. In the prevailing circumstances, that kind of teaching could only imply a call to the people to resist tyranny and injustice wherever found.

However, when the Guru looked around, he regretted that the stuff which was needed for such a difficult task was nowhere to be seen. He found the people at large steeped in obscurantism and sticking to false values of life. He has described them as corpses stuffed with chaff, wasting their precious lives in non-essentials and caring little for the corrupt and oppressive rulers.

The subjects are blind without knowledge; they are like stuffed effigies. Those who claim to be knowledgeable indulge in dancing, music and self-decoration. There are people who loudly sing songs of battles and warriors. The foolish Pandits love argumentation and the accumulation of wealth. There are some religionists who practise *dharma* to get their good deeds admired and in vain cherish the hope for salvation. There are ascetics who are ignorant of what correct method of living is and renounce their household. Everyone of them considers himself free from all deficiencies. They are all mistaken. The true criterion of their merit is the assessment in terms of their recognition or *pat*. At the Court of the Lord neither the caste one belongs to nor the power one possesses will avail; there only the merit of a person will be taken into account. Only such people will be considered virtuous as will get recognition from the Lord (*Asa di Var*).

Guru Nanak not only identified the problem but also offered a solution to it. He urged the importance of an enlightened outlook on life which could not admit of superstitions and taboos with which, thanks to the Brahmanical priesthood, people's lives then were replete. At every step in their lives there were inhibitions which not merely impeded the functioning of the human mind in freedom, but also tightened the hold of the priests on them. They believed in evil spirits and miracles and

because of their simple-mindedness, they were exploited by clever people. In such circumstances as these, the Guru felt the need of re-educating them in the fundamental moral and spiritual values of life. Among the measures suggested for this purpose, the ones rated above all else were *simran*, *sewa*, and *sangat*. *Simran* was the constant remembrance of God, the realization of His presence everywhere in all things and at all times. *Sewa* was doing service in the world. It included taking to a profession and earning livelihood for oneself, one's own family and for the help of the needy. *Sangat* was keeping the company of noble-minded and virtuous people. For the promotion of an enlightened attitude towards life, great emphasis was laid on education. It was described as a great aid to self-discipline and self-improvement. However, a warning was given against the pitfalls of vanity, egotism, presumptuousness and pretence which it often created in the minds of the learned people. In fact, it was pointed out that in case education was only deeply pondered over, did it generate the virtuous spirit of social service.

If he voiced his strong sentiments against the corruption and oppression by the rulers, he did not fail to raise his voice in defence of the womenfolk and the downtrodden elements of the society. The womenfolk were subjected to grave indignities, and that had been their lot for the past several centuries. The Guru put in a strong plea for them, saying:

After the death of one's wife, one seeks another and through her the social bonds are cemented. Why should we condemn the woman who gives birth to leaders and rulers? Everyone is born of a woman and woman alone. Nobody is born otherwise. God alone is an exception to this rule (*Asa di Var*, I).

Guru Nanak idealized the love of a wife for her husband and held it up as an example for a devotee of God. By doing so, the Guru greatly exalted the status of the woman. Here is only one out of the numerous examples:

All wives are in possession of virtues, but not I. That woman is verily pretty who takes *Hari* as her husband. I pray that the same *Prabhu* may show favour to me. Nanak says that the union which is based on *sabad* is irrevocable (*Sri Rag Ashatpadi*, I).

For the downtrodden elements of the society, the Guru had his complete sympathy. He identified himself with them in full measure and was critical of those responsible for their misery. His attitude towards this matter comes out closely in the following quotation from his hymns:

If a piece of cloth be stained with blood, it gets polluted, then, how can the mind of a person remain unpolluted if that person sucks human blood? (*Var Majh*, I).

This is a very bold expression of the Guru's views regarding the people's oppressors, whether Brahmins, *mullas*, *qazis*, kings or their officials.

The principle of justice, as conceived by Guru Nanak, was applicable to all domains of life: religious, social, economic, and political. In the economic field, it laid stress on *haq halal* (righteousness) in earnings and forbade encroachment by one on what rightfully belonged to another.

Encroachment upon what rightfully belongs to others is forbidden to both Muslims and Hindus, as pork to the former and beef to the latter. The *guru* or *pir* can help a person only when he is not guilty of this act which is tantamount to the eating of carrion (*Var Majh*, I).

The accumulation of property, too, does not find favour with the Guru. The argument advanced in this connection is not merely the spiritual one, though the great importance of this aspect is repeatedly stressed that it leads to greediness which is a big impediment in the way of moral and spiritual progress. An equally strong ground on which it is disfavoured is that its accumulation is rendered possible only by acts of injustice and high-handedness.

The accumulation of wealth is not possible without sins; nor does it accompany the accumulator after his death.

In the thinking of Guru Nanak, it is imperative for all people to work hard and earn their living and not to depend upon others. Parasitism is an evil which he condemned in unequivocal terms. Similarly, the begging of alms was disapproved even for those who were called gurus and pirs. The faqirs, sadhus, siddhas, yogis and others, too, who took to begging were all denounced.

One who delivers sermons but begs alms from door to door is blind of mind and devoid of self-respect (*Maru*, I).

No respect ought to be shown even to the *guru* or *pir* who goes abegging for his livelihood (*Var Sarang*, I).

Sharing with others what one earns is regarded by Guru Nanak as very important. His view on this matter is clearly brought out in the following quotation from his hymns.

Only he who earns his living by the sweat of his brow and shares his earnings with others has discovered the path of righteousness, O Nanak (*Var Sarang*, I).

Obviously, this act of sharing one's earnings with others is of voluntary character. The Guru emphasized the voluntary aspect, as it marks a higher stage of moral development in man. He apprehended no difficulty about it, provided the people followed his teachings with regard to

moral and spiritual values of life. If they lived a life of detachment in the midst of the impurities of the world (*anjan mahe niranjan*), they would take to *dan* or *hathon dena* (sharing) without any hesitation, and with pleasure.

However, the voluntary distribution of wealth has little appeal to most of the people who amass it. They are not afraid of the consequences that would flow from the means they adopt for this purpose. The Guru has condemned such people as suckers of human blood. In this case, as in others, he was all for the eradication of injustice and high-handedness. Such people are *murakhs* (idiots) for whom the best remedy, in his words, is: "Only a slap on the face will bring a *murakh* (idiot) to his senses." With such an approach, even the use of force or authoritarian intervention in the interest of social justice would not be incompatible, provided that the remedy in the course of its execution was carefully kept free from elements of injustice.

To sum up: The approach of Guru Nanak to the social problem of his day is a vast subject and it is, indeed, very difficult to compress it into a few pages. But the object of this paper is also a limited one: to indicate the approach of Guru Nanak to this important subject with reference to the ideas of other *bhagats* and *sants* of the medieval period. It will be seen from the text of the paper that whereas other *bhagats* and *sants* were almost wholly preoccupied with mysticism and had only incidental or peripheral interest in the social problem, Guru Nanak, over and above being a mystic, had an acute awareness of the various social issues facing the society of his period and suggested remedial measures which took a concrete shape under his illustrious successors, and distinguished the Sikh movement from all other movements originating in the medieval period. J. D. Cunningham in his book, *A History of the Sikhs* (p. 34), has brought out the point beautifully. He writes:

But these good and noble men (*bhagats* and *sants*) appear to have been so impressed with the nothingness of this life that they deemed the amelioration of man's social condition to be unworthy of a thought. They aimed chiefly at emancipation from priestcraft or from the grossness of idolatry and polytheism. They formed pious associations of contented quietists, or they gave themselves up to the contemplation of futurity in the hope of approaching bliss, rather than called upon their fellow creatures to throw aside every social as well as religious trammel and to raise a new people freed from the debasing corruption of ages. It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of the reform and to lay those foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes.

XIX

SOME SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS IDEALS OF GURU NANAK

K. A. NIZAMI

Guru Nanak is one of those great men of history whose memory is enshrined in the hearts of men and whose fame transcends the bounds of time and space. The universality of his message, combined with a dynamic approach to religion, deep humanism and concern for the outcaste and the downtrodden, immensely raised his stature in the eyes of his contemporaries who flocked to him in large numbers in search of that spiritual solace which is the deepest longing of the human heart. In fact, he belongs to the category of those great men who are not the monopoly of any particular sect, creed or religion, but are common to the whole human race. The following popular saying of the Punjab neatly epitomizes the public feelings of respect and reverence for him:

Guru Nanak Shah Faqir
Hindu ka Guru, Musalman ka Pir.

Guru Nanak believed in a catholic, dynamic and comprehensive concept of religion. Throughout his life, he incessantly strove to bridge the gulf between the various communities and culture-groups of India and preached to them the gospel of truth, love, honesty and moral integrity. The fact that, when he died, the Hindus claimed his body for cremation and the Muslims for burial shows the extent to which he had succeeded in bridging the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims by setting a personal example. Inspired by his tradition, Urfi, a poet of Akbar's court, wrote:

Oh Urfi! Live in such a way with the good and the bad that when
you die the Musalmans may wish to wash you with the *zam-zam* water
and the Hindus may wish to cremate you.

In fact, Urfi, and more so his master Akbar, looked upon this last incident of Guru Nanak's life as the highest achievement of religious toleration and goodwill and wanted to seek its spirit work as an operative principle in the religious life of the Indians.

Guru Nanak believed that beneath the crust of observances, rituals and conventions lay the *real* spirit of religion which it was the duty of a spiritual mentor to awaken. This spirit is the same in all religions:

There is only one path to the Divine Court which is presided over
by the One Eternal Lord.

If this universal spirit of religion could be evoked and channelled rightly, an ideal human society—free from conflicts, dissensions, discrimination and discord—could be established. He proclaimed that the law of life for human beings was to love one another and to find God through loving devotion, when he declared:

Religion consisteth not in mere words.
He who looks upon all men as equal is religious.

He gave religion a new *élan vital* and identified it with the service of humanity.

Guru Nanak used to say that only a mind free from superstition, ignorance and obscurantism was capable of the highest religious experience:

Sweep up the debris of decaying faiths ;
Sweep away the cobwebs of worn-out beliefs,
And throw your soul wide open to the light
Of reason and of knowledge.

Guru Nanak's life was inspired by a deep humanism. Human life is precious, he used to say, and it shall be utilized for the purpose it has been given:

This little shrine of human body!
This great opportunity of life!
The object is to meet the Beloved, thy Master!

And this object could be realized only by serving the cause of the poor and the neglected. He had realized that more than food and fire, man's need was sympathy and brotherhood. His own life was a living symbol of his ideal of human love and sympathy. His comrades worked as humble servants of the poor.

Nanak is with those who are low-born among the lowly,
Nay, who are the lowliest of the lowly ;
How can he rival the great?
Where Thou, O Lord, watchest over the lowly,
Thy look of favour shall be their reward.

To Guru Nanak human greatness did not lie in asceticism or isolation from the energizing currents of social life. He advocated a way of life which allowed for the discharge of civic obligations with the spiritual. He used to say:

If thou must the path of true religion see
Amongst the world's impurities be from impurities free.

He advised his followers to live in the world as a swan lives in water—when it comes out of it, its feathers are all dry :

To live untainted (*nir-anjana*) in the midst of taint (*anjana*) is to practise the true yoga technique.

He himself led a complete life and combined his spiritual mission with the domestic obligations of a father and a husband.

Guru Nanak had a vast and varied experience of life. He traveled extensively, met all sorts of people, rich and poor, Hindus and Muslims, Yogis and Sufis, soldiers and scholars, villagers and townsfolk. This gave him a rare insight into human character and made his methods of persuasion extremely effective. His "sweet reasonableness" brought about amazing transformations in the life and character of all those who came into contact with him. Only one instance would suffice. A wealthy Khatri of Lahore, Duni Chand, who was all the time busy in money matters, once came to see the Guru who gave him a needle and said: "Duni Chand, keep it with thee and give it back to me in the next world." And Duni Chand said: "Master, this needle I shall not be able to carry with me after death, how shall I return it to you?" "What use then, Duni Chand, are thy millions to thee?" And Duni Chand was changed. He distributed most of his wealth amongst the poor and needy and joined the circle of the Guru's followers.

The kernel of Guru Nanak's teachings was the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. Those were not abstract concepts with him but active principles of life based on his personal spiritual experience. He had lively realization of the presence of God. Says the *Janamsakhi* :

God is the one Supreme Being, the Creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, self-existent and the enlightener by His Grace. God is self-existent, so is His name. Besides Himself, He made Nature, wherein He has His seat and looks on with fondness. He who fashioned the body of the Real is also the Creator of the five elements and their master, the mind. Real are Thy works and Thy purposes, Thy rule and Thy orders and edicts, Thy mercy and the mark of Thy acceptance. Hundreds of thousands, nay millions upon millions, call Thee as the true Reality. All forces and energies are from Thee, the great Reality, Thy praise or glorification is of real worth. Those who worship the true Reality are real. Only those who worship what is born and dies are unreal.

Guru Nanak rejected the idea of caste and declared noble character rather than noble birth to be the real test of human greatness :

Remember that actions determine caste ;
Man exalts or lowers himself by his own acts.

Protesting against the theories of birth, he says :

How art thou a Brahmin, and how am I a Sudra?
How am I made of blood and how are thou made of milk?

In the formulation of his cosmopolitan religious thought, Guru Nanak had drawn as much from the Quran as from the Hindu sacred books. Many of his ideas seem to be an echo of the teachings of the Muslim mystics with whom he had long been into contact in the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Respectful references to Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i Shakar in his conversations show that he was deeply influenced by the Chishti mystic ideology.

Few Indians have understood better than Guru Nanak the multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual pattern of the Indian society. He sought to evolve a social attitude which should not merely tolerate different forms of life and thought but would look upon them as part of a common heritage.

XX

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF GURU NANAK'S THOUGHT

SOHAN SINGH

Guru Nanak's ethical thought emanates from his religious experience. In it he was a true son of the Indian religious tradition in which a *jivanmukta* (a man who has achieved perfect religious insight in his lifetime) is distinguished by his character and conduct, which must differ from those of the men around him, who have not been fortunate enough to receive the divine gift. In fact, conduct has a wider and deeper significance in religious life in Guru Nanak's *weltanschauung* than it generally had in that of previous Indian thinkers. This is so because, whereas the dominant strain in Indian thought generally denigrated the reality of the phenomenal world, Guru Nanak, in a way, showed a profounder faith in the Creator by declaring that the creation of the True One could not be devoid of reality. Not only that; His creation was also the place where man recognized His presence. If so, the life of the man of religious insight must have a unique place in the scheme of religious things. At one point, he even declared that though everything else was less important than the vision of Truth, the life of good conduct was even of greater importance than that vision. According to his belief, there could be no life of good conduct without the experience of God. This only means that you cannot separate a man's conduct in the world from his insight of God — the two are the two manifestations of the One Lord, they are of the same species.

The Concept of the Mind

The pattern of a man's actions, good or bad, results from the working of his mind. Hence before we lay hold of the main strands in Guru Nanak's ethical thought, we shall try to bring out the psychological concepts used by him.

The mind is born out of the five elements. In the Indian way of thinking, the five elements are the objects of the five senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste and the skin sensations. In the modern psychological language, the mind is born out of the cognitive, conative and affective activities of the human (or animal) organism. It has three characteristics, all of which are ethically significant. First, it is restless (*chaltai*). This is its aspect of attention. It is hard to fix attention on any object — this

is a commonplace of psychology. As such, concentration of attention is a difficult task and has to be acquired with discipline. Second, the mind implies thinking and reasoning, the attainment of beliefs and of convictions (*mati*). Third, an essential characteristic of the mind is its inherent egocentrism (*haumai*).

Haumai

The third characteristic of the mind deserves more thought. Inevitably, any experience is the experience of an individual and the only way in which this experience comes to consciousness is through the mind of the individual. This is the egocentric predicament. Be he a saint or scoundrel, it is the experiencing individual's mind that organizes all the experiences and derives happiness or suffering from the raw material of his experience. This essential I-ness or my-ness of experience is *haumai*. It is neither good nor bad. It is along with the other two characteristics, a power of the mind, which could be used or misused. It is the power of identification which a man establishes with a way of life.

However, it so happens that man's mind is subject to two pulls on it — there is the pull of man's evolutionary past with its instinctive urges, its familiar topography; there is the call of the future — vague, yet insistent. The former pull, in the terminology of Indian philosophy, is the pull of the five inborn urges of lust, anger, avarice, attachment and pride. There is the great charm of the familiar and established patterns of conduct attached to them. On the other hand is the strange, but nonetheless unignorable, call of the future, embodying the deep urge of the finite to transcend itself. There is no doubt that the scales are weighed heavily in favour of the former pull. Easily, naturally, almost in spite of himself, man's mind is sucked into the life of the established patterns based on the five urges, and the mind identifies itself with this life. This life then becomes the life of the ego, the life of *haumai*, *par excellence*. It is *haumai* not only as a centre of existence for him, it is *haumai*, i.e. what feeds the ego. As against the religious life which keeps a man attuned to the Infinite, this kind of ego-orientation is, in Guru Nanak's language, orientation towards *maya* (falsehood). The religious orientation is orientation towards Truth (*sach*). Left to itself, the mind runs after *maya*, though in doing so, it runs after a mirage. Nevertheless, it is only through this sense of identification that man transfers his allegiance from the path of *maya* to the path of Truth. The mind, along with its inveterate egocentrism, must switch over to the latter — there is no other psychological mechanism to do so. Thus with regard to the sense of identification, Guru Nanak says that it is through egocentrism that man is oriented towards truth or falsehood. As Guru Angad, Nanak II, puts it: "Egocentrism is a chronic disease, but the treatment also lies in egocentrism." With regard to the mind,

Guru Nanak says that just as water is contained in a jar and without water a jar has no value, so the mind is held in its integrity through the knowledge (of the Truth), but without the mind, there can be no knowledge.

Shabad

Man's urge towards ego-transcendence has been, through the generations, cutting its way through the hard basaltic rock of the established ways of worldliness, and sometimes, as soon as a way is cut, it is again covered up by the same stuff, perhaps in a different form. Yet, through the age, a tradition of self-transcendence, that is to say, the religious tradition, has accumulated in every society. This tradition is made into a living message by men who have imbibed and enriched it by their own contributions. Such fountainheads of religious traditions are the Gurus, or Satgurus and their communication of this tradition to their fellowmen is the *Shabad*. So that the *Shabad* enshrines religious tradition in its purity and progressiveness and it is only when a man comprehends the *Shabad* that the life of worldliness or *maya*, that is, the life of the gross *haumai*, born out of lust, anger, avarice, attachment and pride, is replaced by the life of ego-transcendence, the life of Truth or *Nam*. The man who is oriented towards the *Shabad* is a *gurmukh*, as contrasted to *manmukh*, the man oriented towards ego-feeding or *haumai*.

Freedom and Responsibility

It is in this very concept of *haumai* or egocentrism that we must find a solution to the polarity of human freedom and man's determined (and, therefore, freedomless) state. Again and again, Guru Nanak says that man is powerless. The Lord Himself creates the world and runs the mechanism of the whole creation. Some pieces of his game He places in a favourable position, others in a hopeless position. Yet again and again he exhorts man to play his game well, so that he is not defeated in the game, finally.

How can we reconcile these apparently contradictory statements? This is, in fact, a dilemma which has frustrated numerous philosophers who have thought over the problem of freedom *versus* determinism. Guru Nanak's solution of the problem lies within the concept of the supreme creativity of God. Man has come into being in the course of His creation. But man has one characteristic which the rest of the creation lacks — he is self-conscious, he is conscious of his purpose, his ends; through the very fact of egocentrism, he can distinguish between worthy and unworthy deeds. It is as if the Creator has, to serve his own purpose, bestowed a bit of creativity, with its implication of freedom and responsibility, on man. It is as if God has delegated some of his powers to man; the powers can only be utilized within the overall creativity of God. It is the mission of man to approach ever nearer to God. In the measure he does approach

Him, he gains in creativity and freedom. But also in the measure he approaches Him, his creativity comes to accord with that of God. The paradox is that man becomes free and creative in proportion as he aligns himself with God, in proportion as he comes to live consciously, that is, in his expanded and transcended egocentrism, in accordance with His will.

The Source of Morality

As one goes through the composition of Guru Nanak, the inescapable impression one gets is of his all-absorbing concern with the Divine. Yet he is in no way an introvert. He is wide-awake and even sensitive to nature in its variegated forms and to the doings of men in their sublimity as well as depravity. The two aspects of his consciousness are held in unity by his belief that there is no world without God and no God without the world. And man being an important part of this world, we do find in his God-consciousness certain parameters of God-orientated humanity, which define the ethical conduct of man. What is more, he has laid down these in one bunch in the *Japji*. These are the four stanzas — 28 to 31. But they are given there in the form of *sutras* and, therefore, have to be commentarized to bring out their full meaning. Fortunately, interspersed here and there in his extensive work are hints from which a faithful account of his ethical thought can be constructed. This is what we shall try to do in the remaining part of this paper.

The one hallmark of a religious man is that he lives in accordance with the will of God. Ethical norms are created in the course of living thus. This is the meaning of the strain of all the four stanzas in the *Japji*, referred to in the previous paragraph. Broadly speaking, these ethical norms appear in two dimensions, individual and social. We shall take them up for consideration in turn.

Individual Ethics

Ethical norms for an individual are given in the first of the four stanzas. They are seven as follows: contentment (*santokh*), life of reflection (*saram*), right orientation (*dhian*), self-discipline (*jugat*), unidirectionality (*partit*), catholicity (*Aai panthi sagal jamati*) and service (*man jite jagjit*). We will explain them in the light of what the Guru has said on this aspect in other places.

Contentment

In more than one place, Guru Nanak discloses the interrelationship between contentment and *dharma* or the social order. In the *Japji*, he calls *dharma* that which holds men together (as the beads of a necklace are held together) or the string of contentment. In the *Var Asa*, he calls contentment the chariot and *dharma* the charioteer. Thus, for him con-

tentment and *dharma* are but the inner and outer sides, the individual and the social condition of one and the same moral phenomenon — a man's fulfilment of his duties that go along with his station in life. This is also the first stage in the path of the seeker of God and is described in stanza 34 of the *Japji*. The earth with its variety of climates and seasons and soils is the place of performance of *dharma*. To this variety is added the variety of men and women and their specialities and customs. It is in this context of plurality that we judge of a man's actions — whether by his actions he has or has not upheld the social order, comprising the family, the occupations, the religious institutions, the State and other social institutions. The social order demands a certain specific pattern of behaviour from every man or woman in society which is the integrated system of roles of its members. By performing his own roles well, an individual enables others to perform their roles well, and in this way concertedly men build up and uphold the *mriyada* (the ordered pattern) of their society. From this aspect of the individual, it is described as contentment, since a man by observing the duties of his station in life does not permit his ambitions to outrun his own role — he remains contented with his role in society. This is also stressed in the *Gita*. Thus a farmer fulfils his *dharma* by performing well his role as a grower of food or other agricultural commodity needed by the members of his society; a learned man performs his role well by acquiring and diffusing knowledge; a king performs his *dharma* by holding even the scales of justice for every member of the society, etc. Actually, through this variety of roles, they all really perform one role — that of maintaining the desirable social order.

Reflection

But a society is not a machine and man is not a cog in the machine-wheel. He is a self, which can in a way stand apart from its own involvements and, reflecting on them, determine the unsuitability of his own actions in terms of his ultimate concern. That is to say, man has the capacity to withdraw himself in reflection (*saram*), and Guru Nanak exhorts him to exercise this reflection in the light of the *Shabad*. The purpose of reflection is to see what is befitting a knowledgeable man as against an ignorant man, and to take a long-range view of our life in avoiding disvalues and thus to utilize our life to some advantage. What is the morphology of disvalue, or the signs of its presence, seeing which we can know what to avoid? Guru Nanak mentions three types of negative values.

There is first the attachment to ephemeral objects, which we have to avoid. Through reflection, the wise man seeks to find the permanent behind the fleeting fashion and the things which fall prey to time. Of course, all the world we see is impermanent, but hidden behind things are eternal verities. For example, men are born and each lives out his span

of life and fades away; but the social order which continues should be the concern of the wise man. Second, we have to avoid temptations. Beauty, wealth, social status and the sweet pleasures of life are tinsels. As necessities of life, they are to be used; as things which attract by their sheer sweetness we have to be on our guard against them, lest they claim from us what is to be given to God. Third, the kind of egocentrism which curtains off things of real and lasting value from our sight has to be specially guarded against. We have especially to be careful against the subtle ways in which this ego-feeding institutes itself in our life. The learned man is apt to rationalize what is really his love of possessions; the religious man loses all religious merit by claiming the merit. Reflection helps us to sift real values from fake values.

Right Orientation

Of course, ultimately, it is our orientation to God, i.e. *dhian*, which determines the content of the right and wrong in our conduct. This *dhian* is our orientation to the formless, eternal presence, for which Guru Nanak has one favourite name *Nam* (The Name). This *Nam* is to the religious man — in our present context, the ethically oriented man — what a staff is to a blind man. It is *Nam*-orientation which protects man from all allurements and pitfalls in his ethical career. *Nam* is not only the Ultimate Reality, it is the ultimate concern, which appears to us as the Truth (*sach*). This Truth is the great medicine which rinses away the sins (*papas*), the limitations of our finitude. It is the only ultimate cure of our narcissistic egocentrism.

Guru Nanak regards himself as a lowly minstrel whom God has given this occupation, the singing of His glory day and night. And anyone, who goes through his works, in fact, through the whole of the *Guru Granth*, will find the glories of God and the greatness of man's attachment to Him sung at length, which may sound repetitive. The greatest virtue of a religious man, according to Guru Nanak, is his constant awareness of *Nam* (*nam-simaran*).

Nam-simaran is not a mechanical parrot-like repetition of what name you choose to give to God. Guru Nanak says in the *Japji* that there is no devotion if you do not apprehend the qualities of the object of your devotion. And you do not apprehend God's qualities by uttering a formal list of his standard attributes — eternal, formless, self-existent, and so on. God is best seen in His creation which he fills with Himself without appearing to do so. It requires an intellectual effort to apprehend God's qualities as they are embedded in nature. As this intellectual effort is always a difficult task, men allow themselves to slip into the ease of *nam-simaran* as *Nam*-repetition. Perhaps *kirtan* is the most popular form of *nam-simaran* for the masses to listen to and sing the praises of the Lord and to love the Lord wholeheartedly.

Conduct of the True Mind

But *Nam*-orientation must naturally, inevitably issue in "the conduct of the true mind (*shabad sachi taksal*)," i.e. in the self-disciplined and cultured style of life. The standard Sikh formula for ethical conduct is *nam, dan, ishnan* — God-orientation, service to others and the purity of one's own life. Guru Nanak says that a true householder is he who exercises self-control and keeping his desires in check regulates his life. One should eat just as much as is necessary for the maintenance of health, and sleep as little as possible. Knowing their injurious nature, one should keep away from lust and anger. Particularly, we should root out greed or avarice from our minds — only then could we live in the spirit of God.

Equanimity of mind has been regarded highly by all Indian thinkers and Guru Nanak is no exception. If anything, he gives it a positive aspect when he says that wise men, day and night, live in perpetual delight.

The greatest upsetters of evenness of mind are worry and fear. Worry arises from our inability to sunder established links when conditions in the world make them infeasible. Our inability to detach ourselves from our loves and hates arises from the narrowness of our egocentrism. Our loves and hates raise hopes and worries and when the hopes seem to be belied, we fall into an inner tantrum — which is worry. The remedy, it is obvious, lies in rising, through reflection, above the egocentrically generated hopes and fears.

Here we must point out a very common misinterpretation of Guru Nanak's concept of *bhau*. This is often taken as fear. If this is so, Guru Nanak always seems to inculcate fear in the heart of man, as if fear were the essence of religion. But, really, there is no religion where there is fear, and by *bhau* Guru Nanak means discipline or self-regulation. By no psychological alchemy can you create love out of fear, but in many places Guru associates *bhau* (self-regulation) with the love of God. Guru Angad, ever near to Guru Nanak's mind, has explicitly stated that there could be no service of the Lord where there is fear of the Lord; a true servant is he who has completely attuned himself to the Lord.

Going to the root of the matter, the whole trouble arises because of the "pleasure principle" — man's propensity to pursue pleasure, the hallmark of our finitude. But finitude is finitude and the pursuit of pleasure ever lands us in its opposite — suffering. The wise man, therefore, always tries to place himself, through reflection, "out of bounds" to pleasures and sufferings alike.

As mentioned earlier, one of the virtues inculcated is of brief sleep. In other words, laziness is abhorred. Positively, men are exhorted to work hard. The two great aims of life are *nam-simaran* and service to others, and both are worthily achieved only on the basis of a life of hard work. Further, that giving is worthy giving which is given out of the earnings of one's hard work. It is a known fact of history that Guru Nanak tilled

his land to make a living when he settled down at Kartarpur after his preaching tours.

Among the excellences, Guru Nanak mentions in that beautiful hymn *Sodar*, are the mastery of language, knowledge, music, sensitiveness to beauty, awareness of what is happening around you, intelligence, wisdom and literacy.

Last, a man with the "conduct of the true mind" is simple in his appearance and behaviour. Those who assume airs and throw about their weight in the world are so minded that, however often they bathe at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage, the taint could never be removed. Indeed, they are good men in this world who are as silk inside while appearing as coarse clothes outside. A cultured man would combine quiet dignity with simple demeanour. This dignity comes through the economy of speech, avoidance of needless debate, not meddling with others' affairs and, above all, self-reliance. A man who believes in God and acts morally, walks erect with the staff of faith (*partit*) in his hand. In his well-regulated life and in his submission to God he cultivates fearlessness.

Guru Nanak's first thrust at men's narrow, sectarian prejudices was when he proclaimed at the very beginning of his mission that there were no Hindus and no Muslims, meaning thereby that they were both rooted in a common humanity. Between a good Muslim and a good non-Muslim there could be no antagonism. Not only did he say this, but also practised it by admitting to his *sangats*, or fellowships of followers, men of all faiths. He was especially averse to caste distinctions. In the community kitchen which he established soon after settling down at Kartarpur and which has continued since then as a living institution of the organized Sikh religion, all sat together to dine without distinction of high or low. If caste system was not as strong in the Punjab as elsewhere, it was because of the teaching of the Sikh Gurus, begun by Guru Nanak.

Service

Guru Nanak bases the complementary virtue of service on love — for only through love can you conquer the minds of others. A man is as dust and ashes if there is no love in him. Love must be clearly distinguished from the coincidence of self-interests of men. Mutuality based on the exchange of selfish advantages is not love. Love is a genuine shifting of the centre of our life from the individual self, which happens to be us, to the self which is in all. This love expresses itself in characteristics such as sweetness to others in daily life, forgiveness, compassion and service.

Social Concern

One point where Guru Nanak differs from the exponents of the Indian Bhakti is his deep social concern. Some of his most poignant hymns are

those in which he relates the miserable plight of men brought about by the perverseness of those in positions of authority. In the region of morality, he dwells on the role of kings. In the region of knowledge, we should acknowledge those who have shown the way to the blind and, in the region of His grace, the *bhaktas*. His condemnation of unjust kings is strong. Nor did he mince his words with the *sadhus* or *yogis* when he told them what he thought of them for hiding themselves in the mountains while the world was sinking for lack of leadership.

The Ascent of Man

For Guru Nanak, morality is but a stage in man's progress in conquering his finitude. Nor is this stage of morality as yet secure. Man is capable of ascent towards God. His account of the ascent of man is contained in stanzas 34 to 37 of the *Japji*. There, it is shown that, secure in his social position, based on the *mriyada* of his society, the seeker acquires knowledge of various aspects of God's creation. This is the stage of knowledge. As man's knowledge of creation grows, he seeks by reflection to build up an understanding of the Creator. This is the stage of inward withdrawal, for only by withdrawing inward and reflecting deeply on the meaning of creation can we try to understand the Creator. But the understanding of God cannot be forced. It is only when you abandon yourself to the Infinite that the understanding comes to you. This is the stage of His grace. At this stage, he, and along with him the whole world, is immersed within the unity of God.

Vismada

Guru Nanak wished to found a society with its autonomous *mriyada*. It is true that men without fear of either men and intent on God are needed to create such a society; it is equally true that only such a society can produce in sufficient numbers men who could expand the dimension of humanity. A slave society is not in the least equal to this task; a free society alone can produce men with a boundless spirit of adventure in all spheres of man's kingdom. Devotion to God is not a sit-snug position, it is an adventure. As Guru Nanak says, "I see Thy light everywhere and yet I want to know what Thou art. For Thy single form is so hidden away in numerous forms, all different from one another!" If you want to know God, you want to know His creation. His creation is so infinite and varied that a godly man needs perpetually to live in wonder, only then will he have the full good fortune of progressively coming nearer to an understanding of God. This wonder (*vismada*) is the fountainhead of all moral life—it is the source of man's urge to transcend his miserable finitude.

XXI

I SEE ONLY A MAN

MARCUS BRAYBROOKE

In 1889, a meeting occurred between Francis Younghusband and the well-known Russian traveller Captain Grombtchevsky. The Russian came bringing valuable gifts and Francis Younghusband sought desperately for something to give in return. In the end he decided that the only thing he could spare was Monier Williams' book *Buddhism*. "I had been so deeply interested in it myself," wrote Younghusband, "that I assumed he must, of course, be interested in it, too. He said he could not read a word of it. But I told him that did not matter. . . . Probably that poor book about which I was so keen was the next day reposing at the bottom of the Yarkand River."¹

There is something characteristic of Younghusband in this incident. Partly in the value which he attached to Monier Williams' book; but more so in his attempt to share with others his own wide-ranging religious interest. It is as an explorer and one of the first Europeans to visit Tibet that Younghusband is remembered, but of more significance was his exploration in the field of religion. He was a pioneer of the inter-religious cooperation and understanding which the world still so badly needs.

Educated at Clifton College, Bristol, Younghusband was brought up in the conventional public school. Already at his confirmation he was thinking for himself and had some doubts about the virgin birth and the physical resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. During this time he paid a visit to the Alps and this he said "did far more for me. . . than all the sermons I had ever heard."² For he experienced in the presence of those mountains the quest for the ideal, the lure of the unattainable.

His more than average interest in religion is shown by his choice of reading on his journey to India, when in 1882, as a young man of nineteen, he went out to join the King's Dragoon Guards at Meerut. Amongst the biographies which he chose, lives of Christ were prominent. He had time to think and resolved that he would no longer take anything on authority. Religious ritual and dogma were unimportant. Jesus Christ must be thought of as a real man—beset with all the frailties of men—who became great because of his indomitable courage and fortitude. His basic convictions were already largely fixed. They were

to develop in two main ways: in greater experience of the mystery of the Universe and in a broadening of sympathy and understanding of all faiths.

The crowning spiritual experience of his life came in 1904 on the mountain-side overlooking Lhasa, after the completion of his difficult mission to Tibet. Let me use his own words to describe it.

I went off alone to the mountain-side, and there gave myself up to all the emotions of this eventful time. Every anxiety was over. The tension was off. I could just rest and be thankful. And Nature was in tune with my feelings. The unclouded sky was of the clearest Tibetan blue. The mountains were bathed in purply haze. In mystery the sacred city was once more wrapped. But I no longer had cause to dread the hatred it might hide. I was naturally elated at having brought to a successful issue a most difficult and dangerous mission. I was naturally full of goodwill, since my former foes were converted into stalwart friends. But there now grew up in me something infinitely greater than mere elation and goodwill. Elation grew to exultation, and exultation to an exaltation which thrilled through me with overpowering intensity. I was beside myself with untellable joy. The whole world was ablaze with the same ineffable bliss that was burning within me. I felt in touch with the flaming heart of the world. . . . Never again could I think evil. Never again could I bear enmity. Joy had begotten love. I was boiling over with love for the whole world. I could embrace every single human being. . . .

I had visions of a far greater religious faith yet to be, and of a God as much greater than our English God as a Himalayan giant is greater than an English hill. But just to have enjoyed the experience did not finally satisfy me. I would communicate it to all the world.³

There were other similar experiences. These were the living heart of Younghusband's faith—the personal knowledge of God's infinite love—which left him feeling that he was in love with every man and woman in the world.⁴

This sense of the love that binds all things together obviously contributed to his concern for interfaith cooperation. Yet already before his experience at Lhasa, his eyes had been opened to new and far horizons. He had conversed with Christians of many denominations and with adherents of other faiths. Was one true and all the rest false? He had met men who professed no faith, but in whom he had found many admirable characteristics. In the solitude of the Gobi Desert, he had studied the works of Darwin, which were to him a revelation. Renan's *Life of Jesus* and Seeley's *Ecce Homo* confirmed his view of Jesus. The book which influenced him most was Tolstoi's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which also had a profound effect on Gandhi.

It was a long time before his sense of the unity of all faiths was to find concrete expression. The lasting memory of his vision is the World Congress of Faiths which he founded in 1936. The idea of such a fellowship, however, did not originate with Younghusband.

The first significant inter-religious gathering was 'The World's Parliament of Religions' held on the occasion of a World Fair in Chicago in 1893, at which Swami Vivekananda became known. An 'International Congress of the History of Religions' was founded in Paris in 1900 and held several meetings. At Chicago the 'First International Congress of the World Fellowship of Faiths' was held, at which Sir Francis (as he now was) was asked to speak. Several meetings followed this in various American cities and the organizers of these asked him to inaugurate another such Congress in London.

Sir Francis gladly gave his acceptance and called together some fifty representatives of all the great religions of the world to form a nucleus of the eventual Congress. He gave them an outline of the principles and ideals which he had in mind. Some of this outline is worth quoting:

To promote the spirit of fellowship was the one aim of the Congress. The organizers had no intention of formulating another eclectic religion, nor of appraising the value of the existing religions, nor of maintaining that all were equally true, nor of seeking the lowest common denominator and building on that. Not breadth without depth did they seek, but only that breadth which comes naturally by deepening depth. . .

The conception of unity in difference, of differentiation in unity, of the reciprocal need of the whole for the part and of the part for the whole, till the incohesion of a crowd could be transformed into the fellowship of a choir 'was, indeed, the basic conception upon which the Congress was founded. . .

Efforts would be made to take a world-view to develop a world-consciousness, and to create a sense of world-fellowship, and a world soul might result therefrom. But such a world soul would never stifle the soul of the individual: indeed the precise opposite would be the case.⁵

The outbreak of war, Sir Francis Younghusband's death in 1941, a more dogmatic atmosphere in Christian theology and other factors hindered the growth of the World Congress of Faiths. It remains a small body. The number of people of real faith is limited and of that number only a minority are interested in faiths other than their own. Yet I believe that the World Congress of Faiths has had an influence far larger than its numerical membership might suggest and that it points the way to the fellowship of the future. World peace and a new world order must have a spiritual basis and only the great faiths working in harmony can provide that basis.

How then can the great faiths end their long history of rivalry and work in harmony?

First, men of faith must meet and try to understand one another. Some of this will be at the academic level—the study of the great scriptures, the comparative treatment of doctrines: but the real encounter must be at a personal level. It is the attempt of the two people to try to understand what the other holds sacred, to discover what it is that gives meaning and purpose to his life. Professor Cantwell Smith has

said, in this context, of the study of Hinduism: "It is what the Hindu is able to see by being a Hindu that is significant. And we may be sure that, as he looks around him, he does not see 'Hinduism.' Like the rest of us, he sees his wife's death, his child's minor and major aspirations, his money-lender's mercilessness, the calm of a starlit evening, his own mortality."⁶ We need to discover the individual in his particularity—not the type. Let me put this in another way. Leonard Hodgson has said that in studying the New Testament we have to be aware how different our own world-outlook is to that of the writers of the New Testament. The question always to be asked is: What must the truth have been if men who thought like that, wrote like that? We must take seriously the individuality of the other, moulded as he has been by a different religious culture and try to penetrate to his answers to the existential questions that are common to all men.

Such meeting requires humility to listen, and imagination and sympathy to understand. It does not mean any denial of our own convictions. We may think that our own religion contains the fullest truth: but we must respect the right of the other to hold the same conviction about his faith. For myself, I believe that the fullest revelation of God is in Jesus Christ, but that for the wholeness of truth we need the particular insights of all the great faiths. Although there is much in common, each religion has a distinctive flavour and particular contribution to make to the Wholeness of Truth.

As we do meet, we discover much in common. There is first our common humanity. It is interesting that in founding the World Congress of Faiths, Sir Francis stressed the need for social gatherings which "would afford opportunities of forming friendships."⁷ Such friendships triumph over the barrier of colour and creed.

Our common humanity can also inspire us to common service to the needy. There is a folk-song by Sydney Carter, which has become famous in Christian Aid circles. It is called "Were you there when I needed a neighbour?" The refrain is "And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?" The motto of Christian Aid and other relief bodies is "need not creed." The human dignity which all faiths teach us to uphold makes us partners in the struggle against poverty, prejudice and war.

This service to the needy is itself inspired by similar ethical ideals. A knowledge of religions other than our own helps us to see the relativity of many ceremonials and rituals. These have their place, but only insofar as they promote a godly life. The ethical emphasis of the great religions is different, but there is an underlying unity. S. C. Thakur in his recent book, *Christian and Hindu Ethics*, concludes that "Whatever their differences as religions, as systems of ethics Christianity and Hinduism are remarkably similar, or, at least, not so far apart as is often imagined."⁸

Most important, however, is the common sense of the sacred. Obviously

the theistic religions have most in common and, as a Christian, I could echo Guru Nanak's sayings about God: but with the non-dualism or Advaita or the agnosticism of Theravada Buddhism the link is less close. Yet all religions have a sense of something greater than man and all have a common quest for Truth. It is the common quest mostly that unites the great faiths. In the end one is interested in one's own religion only if it is true. If it is true there is nothing to fear from open encounter with other faiths. If it needs some correction, then there is everything to gain from such encounter. There is truth in Coleridge's warning: "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."⁹

These underlying ideals of the World Congress of Faiths which took their origin in the thought of Sri Francis Younghusband, have a close affinity to the teachings of Guru Nanak. His earliest biographer describes his dress as the Guru started on his journey to the east: "Nanak's dress now was a strange motley: a mango-coloured jacket, over which he threw a white sheet, the hat like that of a Muslim anchorite, with a necklace of bones upon his neck, and a frontal mark of saffron, imprinted on his forehead in the style of the Hindu devotee."¹⁰ His dress was partly Hindu, partly Muslim and scholars have disputed the Hindu and Muslim influences upon his teaching. Yet this is to misunderstand the Guru's own authentic encounter with God. His personal experience of the Love of God showed him, like Sir Francis, the relativity of credal division. After his vision of God, his first saying was, "I see here neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, only a man."¹¹ He preached to Hindu and Muslim alike.

His personal experience of God showed him, as Sir Francis also discovered, the relativity of ceremonial. There are many stories to illustrate this — perhaps the incident at Mecca is the most striking. The Guru is said to have slept the night with his feet towards the holy Kaaba — an act of sacrilege to a Muslim. An Arab priest was much enraged and kicked him, saying, "You infidel, knowest thou not that thou turnest thy feet towards the house of God?" The Guru replied, "Turn my feet to whichever side there is no God." The Mulla dragged his feet in the opposite direction, but saw a vision of God in that direction also.¹²

The Guru constantly pointed to the ethical significance underlying ceremonial. When some yogis asked him to adopt their dress, he replied:

Yoga consists not in a patched gown, nor in the yogi's staff, nor in smearing one's body with ashes, nor in earrings, nor in a shaven head, nor in the blowing of the horn. Yea, he alone knows the way who abides amidst the impurities of the world and yet remains detached and spotless. Yoga consists not in words: For, he alone is a yogi who looks upon all men as equal: And dies while yet alive, and hears the Unstruck Melody and enters into the state of fearlessness, when one's doubt is dispelled, and cease the outgoings of the mind: And nectar rains upon one's mind, and oozes the music of equipoise within one, and one comes to know oneself.¹³

It was his own personal knowledge of God — his search for Truth — that enabled him to see the limitations of ceremonial and the importance of a holy life. "Blessed," he said, "is the devotee who is above ritual, above the domain of the mind and is awake to the knowledge that the Lord knoweth all."¹⁴ It enabled him to see the unimportance of credal and communal distinction. It was the same vision that inspired Sir Francis Younghusband and must inspire men of faith today. It is the vision of God, who is all-Truth, in whom all meet and know that they are brothers. "Truth alone saves us, yea, Truth alone."

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XXII

THE MYSTIC TEACHINGS OF GURU NANAK

J. R. PURI

Seeing without eyes, hearing without ears,
Walking without feet, working without hands,
Speaking without the tongue, thus dying while living,
O Nanak, is the way unto the Lord
To be attained through His Grace ...

From the Shabd cometh the earth,
From the Shabd cometh the sky,
From the Shabd emanateth all light.
The whole creation resteth on the Shabd
And this Shabd, O Nanak, resideth within man.

Without the Satguru no one ever found God
Without the Satguru no one ever shall ...

— *Guru Granth*

The Advent of Guru Nanak

When the world is engulfed in the darkness of ignorance and caught in the thralldom of passion, saints and prophets appear to redeem it from these evils. Guru Nanak was born at a time, when the true spirit of religion had vanished. The Hindus and the Muslims alike had come to identify religion with rituals or ceremonies. Practices such as the wearing of the sacred thread, the applying of streaks of saffron to the forehead, the mechanical telling of beads, the repetition of prayers without understanding them and the cruel sacrifice of animals, and even of human beings, to appease gods and goddesses had come to acquire the connotation of religion. The unity of Godhead had been lost in the worship of numerous small deities. Nor were the Jains and the Buddhists quite free from such a degradation of the human spirit. For all of them the concept of religion had been reduced to a mere dogma, to a sham, to an empty show. They had, as it were, lost the kernel of religion and had become content merely with its husk. Guru Nanak came in the line of the great saints, who emphasized only personal experience of the Divine as the core of true religion. He repudiated all caste distinctions, all narrow, parochial divisions and the ceremonial aspects, which had come to characterize the religions of his time. He came to clear the minds of men of the cobwebs of superstition and bigotry. Nor

was this all. He did not merely introduce reason into the examination of religious beliefs, which might have ended in the blind alley of scepticism. He had a positive message to give. This message was one of hope and cheer to dispel the all-pervading gloom of the sceptic and the cynic.

Guru Nanak gave a meaning to human life and his teachings gave a direction to the attainment of the ultimate goal. Perhaps this message was not quite new, for it was ingrained in the scriptures and culture of ancient India. But it had been gradually lost over the centuries. He revived it in a manner which was both refreshing and emphatic. He impressed on his contemporaries that human life was not aimless like that of the animals which are born, which grow and then die. That, indeed, is not the purpose of human existence. Out of the myriads of biological species, it was given only to man to find a way out of the recurring process of birth in the theory of reincarnation and the transmigration of the soul. There were eighty-four lakhs of species of living beings and they were all going round and round in the never-ending cycle of birth and death. Indeed, the whole of creation could be compared to a huge mansion with eighty-four lakhs of different apartments, none of which had an outlet except one. This one outlet was the human form. Thus, out of the vast prisonhouse of this world, man alone had been endowed with the possibility of finding release from it. Man was, thus, qualitatively superior to all other living species, "but to man He hath given the pride of place. For, whosoever slippeth from this rung of the ladder, he continues to suffer from the pangs of birth and death."¹ And again: "Even the gods and goddesses pine for the human body, for within this body resideth the Lord Himself."²

Not only does God live within the human body, but it is only within this body that He manifests Himself. Thus it is doubly blessed, for it contains Him and it reveals Him. The *Guru Granth* says: "The temple of God is this body which manifesteth the rarest gems of knowledge; but the worldly men know not at all that man can be the temple of God."³ Likewise: "The human body is a beautiful town, in which you obtain the divine nectar."⁴

It is, thus, a folly to look for the Divine Being outside. All attempts to seek Him in temples, mosques and churches, in forests and mountains, in plants, birds and animals are bound to end in failure. Guru Nanak denounces all such attempts in strong terms, for he says: "Whosoever seeketh the Lord elsewhere, and not in his own body is verily a fool, in delusion doth he wander from place to place like the deer, who in quest of his own musk, looketh into bushes and shrubs."⁵

This assessment of the human form is not confined to Guru Nanak or even to the Indian scriptures. It is quite prominent even in the Quran, for it puts man on "top of the creation." Likewise, Jesus Christ says, "God created man in His own image." Thus Guru Nanak brought to the surface a truth, which had been stated by almost all the great religions of the world, but which had perhaps been temporarily forgotten.

The Mystic Experience

The focal point which lies at the centre of Guru Nanak's teachings is personal experience of the Divine. It is this experience which leads to the consummation of all desired ends. It takes one beyond the realm of time and space and all its attendant evils. Negatively, it gives one release from sorrow and suffering, release from the cycle of birth and death. Positively, it produces bliss, beatitude and eternal peace. Since it is a state of timelessness, it is a state which has no beginning, no end, no growth, no decay. And, since this consciousness transcends time, of necessity, it also rises above the level of cause and effect. For these terms signify nothing but events which occur earlier and later in time.

This personal experience of the Divine, often called "religious experience," is what the philosopher calls "mystic experience." Now, what exactly is meant by mysticism? The word "mysticism" is often used in a variety of ways, which are loose and incorrect. For instance, it is sometimes identified with anything, which is misty, foggy, vague or sloppy. It is absurd, as Stace says, to associate mysticism "with what is misty" because of the similarity of sounds, for there is nothing misty, foggy or vague about mysticism, as it has a precise meaning.

Another absurd association is to relate mysticism with mystery-mongering. There is, of course, an etymological connection between "mysticism" and "mystery"; nevertheless, mysticism is not a kind of hocus-pocus. It has nothing to do with claims to the elucidation of sensational mysteries. Again, mysticism is not the same as what is commonly called the 'occult.' Nor has it anything to do with spiritualism or ghosts or table-turning. Nor does it stand for what are commonly called parapsychological phenomena such as telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance or precognition. It is possible that mystics may sometimes claim to possess such powers but even when they do, they are well aware that such powers are not part of the mystical experience. Such powers, if they exist could be possessed by persons who are not mystics.

Finally, visions and voices are not to be included among mystical phenomena, though it may be that the sort of persons who are mystics are also the sort of persons who see visions and hear voices. For instance, the voices which certain persons in history, such as Socrates, Mohammad and Joan of Arc are supposed to have heard cannot be classed as mystical experiences. If these persons are to be considered mystics, they are not to be classed as such because of these voices. In fact, mystics who also saw visions did not themselves regard such visions as mystical experiences. A case in point is St Teresa of Avila who frequently had visions but she knew that they were not the experiences she desired.

William James in his book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, has suggested that our normal consciousness is but one special kind of

consciousness, and all about it, but parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. This statement quite fits mystic consciousness. For it is quite unlike our everyday consciousness, and is wholly incommensurable with it. Our ordinary consciousness is like a building with three floors. The ground floor consists of physical sensations—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch sensations and organic sensations. The second floor consists of images, which we believe to be mental copies of our sensations. The third floor contains the intellect, which is the faculty of concepts. This floor is characterized by reasoning and abstract thinking. Now all these three floors comprise the entire cognitive aspect of ordinary consciousness. Arising from these basic cognitive elements, and dependent upon them are emotions, desires and volitions. In order to have a name for this entire structure, we call it our "sensory-intellectual consciousness."

Now mystic consciousness is qualitatively and radically different from it. It is not merely that it involves different kinds of sensations, thoughts or feelings. For instance, some insects, such as the bee, can perceive ultraviolet colour and infra-red colour, and some animals such as the dog can hear sounds which are inaudible to the human ear, even that some animals have a sixth sense different from any of our five senses. These are no doubt sensations different from any that we can have. But they are still sensations. But the mystical consciousness is devoid of any sensation at all, as also of concepts or thoughts. It is not a sensory-intellectual consciousness at all, and so it cannot be described or analysed in terms of any of the elements of the sensory-intellectual consciousness, with which it is wholly incommensurable.

This, indeed, is the reason that mystics always say that their experiences are ineffable. All our words in all languages are the product of the sensory-intellectual consciousness which expresses its elements or some combinations of them. But, since none of these elements are found in mystic consciousness (with the doubtful exception of emotions), it is felt to be impossible to describe it in any words whatever.

So far we have confined our account primarily to what mysticism is not. We shall now try to seize upon, in a positive manner, the common characteristics which are fundamental to all true mystical experiences. Although mystical experiences may, in certain respects, differ in different parts of the world, in different ages and in different cultures, the agreements are more basic and important and the differences are superficial and relatively less important.

The most important, the central characteristic in which all fully developed mystical experiences agree, is that they involve *an ultimate non-sensuous unity in all things*, a oneness or a One, which the senses or the reason cannot penetrate. This may be considered to be the definitive characteristic which serves to mark off mystic consciousness from all other forms of experience. To quote Guru Nanak: "One alone pervadeth, O Nanak,

no second was there, nor ever shall be.”⁶ Again, in no less emphatic terms does he say: “All is God, all is God; without God is naught.”⁷ And finally, “He Himself is the pot, and Himself the pot-maker and Himself even the clay of the pot” — Rumi. It may be pointed out here that to call the mystic experience an apprehension of the Unity is considered an inadequate, if not an incorrect, expression by some mystics, since it supposes a division between the subject and the object. They insist that we should say that the experience is the one. For instance, Plotinus writes, “We should not speak of seeing, but instead of seen and seer, speak boldly of a simple Unity, for in this seeing we neither distinguish nor are there two.”

Another salient feature of all true mystic experience is that it is accompanied with a strong effective tone, which is generally described as bliss, blessedness or beatitude. This feeling is qualitatively different from empirical pleasure. For, the pleasures of the senses are both limited in their range and relative in their scope. They soon get satiated and, indeed, they can change into painful states. Moreover, they are always relative to certain unpleasant conditions. For example, the pleasure of eating is relative to a state of hunger, which is not pleasant. Now in contrast to this, the mystic bliss is both unlimited and absolute. It suffers no satiety or decline. It has the character of ‘permanent’ in it. And it is absolute, because it is not subject to, or to be preceded by, an unpleasant state.

Finally, the mystic experience is marked by a sense of supreme value. It gives the mystic the realization that he has attained the ultimate Truth. Simultaneously, it dawns upon him that this sensory spatio-temporal world is unreal, a mere appearance, which he often calls an illusion or a delusion. Spinoza has remarked that the path to salvation lies on the razor’s edge, but then what is ultimately attained is of supreme value and is worth all the trouble that one has to undergo.

Philosophers generally distinguish between two main types of mystical experience. For instance, this is the view both of Walter Stace and Rudolf Otto, as expressed in their books, *Mysticism and Philosophy* and *Mysticism East and West*. They are called “Extrovertive Mystical Experience” and “Introvertive Mystical Experience” and both these varieties are found in all the higher cultures. Both of them are apprehensions of the One, but they reach it in different ways. The extrovertive way looks outwards and through the physical senses into the external world and finds the One there. The introvertive way looks inward through introspection and finds the One at the bottom of the self. The latter is far more important than the former and is the major strand in the history of mysticism.

The extrovertive mystic continues to perceive the world with his physical senses as a multiplicity of objects, but he sees these objects transfigured in such a manner that the Unity shines through them. Thi-

is the nuclear point, around which all other common characteristics revolve. This implies a second universal characteristic, namely that the experience has an objective reference and is not merely an inner and subjective state of the mystic. This is what James called "noetic quality." A third universal characteristic is paradoxicality. It seems to disregard the commonly accepted laws of logic. The fourth characteristic is bliss, beatitude or joy and a sense of supreme value. Along with it is the feeling that what is apprehended is holy, sacred or divine. This is what makes the mystic take the experience as experience of God. And last, it is said to be ineffable. Such expressions as "inexpressible," "unutterable," "impossible to describe," bespatter the mystic writings all over the world.

The basic psychological facts about the introvertive type of mystical experience are in principle easy to state and undoubtedly in essence they are the same all the world over, in all cultures, religions, places and ages. They are, however, so extraordinary and paradoxical that they are bound to strain belief when suddenly presented to one who is not prepared for them.

The introvertive mystic claims that he stops up the inlets of the physical senses so that no sensations could reach consciousness. This would seem to be easy in the case of the eye, ears, nose and tongue, but would be difficult in the case of the sense of touch and the organic sensations. However, the mystic claims to achieve this by constant and hard practice.

Having got rid of all sensations, the mystic next excludes from consciousness all sensuous images, and then all abstract thoughts, reasoning processes, volitions and other particular mental contents. One may ask, what then would be left of consciousness? In the absence of any mental content whatsoever, there would be a complete emptiness, a void, a vacuum. One would suppose *a priori* that consciousness would then entirely lapse and one would fall asleep or become unconscious. But the introvertive mystics unanimously assert—and there are thousands of them all over the world—that they have attained to a complete vacuum of particular mental contents, but then what emerges is a state of pure consciousness. It is pure in the sense that it is not the consciousness of any empirical content. It has no content except itself. And this self-realization is often eventually spoken of as God-realization. Jalal-ud-Din Rumi describes the same process when he says:

O close thou thine eyes, thine ears and thine lips, and if thou dost not behold the secret of God, then laugh at me.⁸

Guru Nanak, likewise, refers to the insipid pleasures of the senses and points to the bliss which transcends them, when he says:

Nine doors there are, and tasteless are all the nine,
For the real nectar droppeth inside the tenth.⁹

The paradox involved in this experience of the undifferentiated unity is that there should be a positive experience which has no positive content—an experience which is both something and nothing. Stace calls it the plenum-vacuum paradox of mysticism.

The mystic also sometimes expresses it by saying that he gets rid of the empirical ego only to bring to light the pure ego, which normally remains hidden. The empirical ego is the stream of consciousness, the pure ego is the unity which holds the manifold of the stream together. This undifferentiated unity is the essence of the introvertive mystical experience.

All this goes against the philosophy of David Hume who had stressed that the self was to be known as some particular mental content, for "I can never catch myself at any time without a perception."¹⁰ Hume concludes from this that there is no such thing as a self or ego, and that a person is "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions."¹¹ The substantial self which the mystic affirms and Hume denies is what Kant called the transcendental unity of apperception.

How can we reach this extraordinary psychological condition? Methods and techniques for attaining it were not only discovered, but worked out in detail in India long ago, even before the age of the Upanishads. They constitute the various practices and kinds of yoga. Apart from certain physical disciplines, such as breathing exercises, there has to be a great and continual effort at the control and discipline of the mind. In the West, among mystics these methods have not been basically very different. Of course, Christian mystics, such as St Teresa, have emphasized the importance of prayer or "Orison," but this does not consist in begging favours but in strenuous efforts to obtain a direct experience of the Divine Being in mystical ecstasy. And, according to them, union with God normally occurs only when all the empirical contents of mind have been got rid of and the empty ground of the self in pure consciousness has been reached.

From the above it is obvious that the introvertive type of mystical consciousness is usually acquired after long years of effort and does not come spontaneously. However, in rare cases, spontaneous introvertive experiences do occur, but they are not the rule.

Some of the Western thinkers, such as Walter Stace and Rudolf Otto, seem to hold the view that the two kinds of mystic consciousness, extrovertive and introvertive, are quite different and perhaps mutually exclusive. It appears to me that they are mistaken in their view. It is my contention that after experiencing the introvertive type of consciousness, which is by far the more important, the mystic also begins to experience the extrovertive type. For having divested himself of all empirical contents in a state of introvertive consciousness, the mystic does not only discover the undifferentiated unity within himself as a reality, but of necessity he will also find outside an overriding unity

behind all multiplicity. Without the inner experience of the One, he cannot see that all multiplicity as well as all movement or change is mere appearance. An example will illustrate the point. If a person has never seen the process of formation of water by combining hydrogen and oxygen in certain proportions, he will have good common-sense arguments to support his doubt. For instance, hydrogen burns and oxygen is an excellent supporter of combustion. Now water is something which neither burns itself nor permits anything else to burn in it. Likewise the mystic who has had a vision of the undifferentiated reality within himself will begin to see the hollowness of the "many" which he perceives through his senses, and will start perceiving an all-pervading unity.

Almost all the general characteristics of the extrovertive type are common with introvertive mystic consciousness, except that the latter is experienced as unitary consciousness, from which all the multiplicity of sensuous or conceptual or other empirical content has been excluded. This, of course, is the one basic, nuclear characteristic from which all other characteristics follow. From this also comes the second difference that introvertive consciousness is non-spatial and non-temporal.

Although there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between the mystics of the East and the West in regard to the extrovertive and introvertive types, yet it is true that, by and large, the mystics of the East lay emphasis on the introvertive variety. They seem to hold the view or give the impression that once that elevating state of unitary consciousness is attained through certain practices or yogas, all the rest will follow naturally. For instance, the perception of an all-pervading unity behind the apparent multiplicity of the world will be a natural consequence of the inner realization.

It may be mentioned in passing that although the mystics claim that their special experience is the source of all moral values, yet the mystic experience itself is beyond good and evil, and that these terms have no relevance to it. It is as if the mystic rises above the stream of actions which are subject to moral evaluation. For all distinctions of right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and bad are applicable in the world of phenomena, and they disappear or get resolved at the level of mystic consciousness. Thus the mystic does not only transcend the sensory-intellectual consciousness with its attendant aspects of space and time, but he also transcends the ethical level of values, which manifests itself in the distinctions between the moral and the immoral.

There are a large number of mystic schools which differ not only on the basis of practices involved but also on the aspects on which emphasis is put. In regard to the mystic practices, different schools select different parts of the body on which concentration is to be fixed and different exercises — both mental and physical — are to be gone through. It is not possible to give a detailed account of all the schools in this comparatively short paper. All that I propose to do is to name some of the important

schools and to give the central idea on which each is based. These are *Karma Yoga*, *Upasana Yoga*, *Laya Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, *Tapasya*, *Hatha Yoga*, *Pranayama*, *Jnana Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*. *Karma Yoga* is not exactly a method of concentration. It is the belief that salvation can be attained through performing right *karma* or actions and doing one's duty without any desire for reward. This school is generally associated with Sri Krishna who advocated it in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. *Upasana Yoga* is based on the method of worship, whether of material images of the devotee's deity or it may be the inner mental worship. In *Laya Yoga*, the individual tries to collect all his conscious current within himself through the inner repetition of some holy name. This enables him to withdraw all his mental contents into their source. This method gives the devotee a taste of the inner spiritual bliss and some supernatural powers. *Raja Yoga* is said to have been practised in olden times by kings and rulers. In it, the devotee resorts to the repetition of some name to collect his attention behind the two eyes. In this practice, importance is given to the feeling of detachment from the material world (*vairagya*) and the power of discrimination between the real and the unreal, between what is good and what is evil, and such other concepts, i.e. *Viveka*. In *Tapasya*, there is the predominant element of asceticism involving cruelty or torture to the body. Along with the repetition of a holy name, some organs of the body are put in painful position, such as holding up the arm in the air for a long time with the result that either it dries up or it becomes lifeless. By thus tormenting the body, the individual hopes to achieve victory of the spirit over the flesh. *Hatha Yoga*, too, lays great emphasis on the body. It involves various practices to cleanse the body and some difficult postures which protect one against various bodily diseases. The course is quite long, tedious and difficult. *Pranayama* is primarily concerned with the holding of the breath and with the controlling of it. This practice culminates in the individual's merging himself in that subtle essence of breath, which is the source of all kinds of air. *Jnana Yoga* believes in securing salvation, and access to higher spiritual places through knowledge (*Jnana*). It constantly contemplates the great mystic truths, such as the nature of the soul and its oneness with God. For instance, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna:

Nor at any time was I not, nor thou, nor these princes of men, nor verily shall I ever cease to be hereafter.¹²

Again,

He who thinks he kills, and he who thinks he is killed, are both ignorant; for neither doth he kill, nor is he killed.¹³

About the soul, he further says:

Never is it born, nor doth it die, nor is it such that being once, it should cease to be. Everlasting and eternal, even with the destruction of body, it doth not die.¹⁴

Bhakti Yoga is based on the principle of love, devotion and faith. The devotee is intensely attached to the Beloved Lord and is completely resigned to His supreme will, for he has faith in His perfection, kindness and loving nature. *Bhakti* has sometimes been classified into two kinds, mixed and pure. In mixed *bhakti*, desire for some sort of reward lingers in the mind of the devotee, whereas in pure *bhakti*, there is no such desire. In it there is only an urge for service for the sake of service and devotion for the sake of devotion. *Bhakti* here is not a means to an end, but the end in itself.

The spiritual practice attributed to Guru Nanak may be called *Surat Shabd Yoga*. It has also been described by other names such as simply *Shabd Yoga*, *Sahaj Yoga* or *Shabd Abhyas*. In it, the individual withdraws his attention and soul current from all over his body to a point behind the two eyes called "The Third Eye." He must shut all his sense-organs which serve as windows for the outside world. The third-eye focus is supposed to be the seat of the soul in the waking state. By assiduously concentrating his attention at this centre, which might be called 'the headquarters of the soul,' the devotee is able to attain the state of *samadhi* or spiritual trance, which is a state of pure consciousness and which yields bliss and peace. As to how this state can be achieved, Guru Nanak writes:

Close thou the nine doors, and collect thou thy scattered mind in the tenth, which leadeth thee to thy True Home; there ringeth the transcendent music day and night, which thou canst hear with the help of a mystic adept.¹⁵

And the following lines too bring home the same truth:

Nine doors He manifesteth, but the tenth He keepeth hidden. Through devotion to a mystic adept, to some He showeth the tenth door, which opens out forms of wondrous beauty and the nine treasures beyond description.¹⁶

What are we to understand by the term *Shabd*? Ordinarily, it means any sound. It also stands for a religious song or hymn. But, for the mystics, it is a superconscious transcendent entity. "It can neither be heard with the ears, nor uttered by the tongue. Pen cannot write it, language cannot describe it." It transcends human understanding, goes beyond all duality and relativity. And it penetrates all things and beings. "Without the *Shabd*," says Guru Nanak, "there is darkness within us. Without the *Shabd*, neither can the mortal coil be removed, nor can we end the cycle of birth and death."

The Siddhas ask Guru Nanak:

Where doth that *Shabd* abide which taketh us across the ocean of the world? Ten kinds of air we have, on which doth it depend?¹⁷

And the Guru answers:

That *Shabd* abideth within, transcendent; I behold it whtrever I look.
The source of all air is in *Sunna*, but this *Shabd* doth not depend on anything.¹⁸

The word *Shabd* has been expressed by many other terms in the *Guru Granth*, such as *Nam* and *Bani*. "From age to age existeth the *Bani* known as the *Shabd* or *Nam*, sweet and dear."¹⁹

John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, called it "The Word." "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God."²⁰

In the Vedas, it has been termed *Nada* or Heavenly Sound. The Muslim mystics have called it *Kalima*, the Word of God, the Heavenly Sound or the Highest Name.

This spiritual "Sound Current" emanates from the Supreme Being and creates and sustains all planes and if we were to compare the Absolute Lord to spiritual ocean and our souls to drops of it, then this spiritual current would be a vast river which flows out of the ocean and waters all the lower regions.

Thus the *Shabd* is God's very being and essence. It reverberates in all planes and is the source of all life and the fountainhead of all consciousness. It may be taken as the omnipresent form of God. And since in essence the soul and the *Shabd* are one, it draws the soul upwards as a magnet attracts a needle. That is why this method is called the *Surat Shabd Yoga*, i.e., the union of the soul with the transcendent *Shabd*.

Speaking of this method, Guru Nanak says: "By *Surat-Shabd* do thou cross the ocean of phenomena, O Nanak, by uttering his *Nam*."²¹ And again: "How can the mundane find the *Surat-Shabd*? Without *Surat-Shabd*, they keep on coming and going."²² The Muslim mystics have expressed the same idea in almost similar terms. For instance: "Listen thou to the 'Eternal Word,' which will give thee deliverance from birth and death."²³ And Jalal-ud-Din Rumi has this to say in this context:

Bring the firmament under thy feet, O thou brave one, and then listen
thou to the divine melody coming from the heavens above.²⁴

And last:

Many a kind of delicious music and many a sweet melody did I hear,
and then for me the temple and the mosque both became heretic.²⁵

Salvation Now and Here

It is a commonly held belief among Indians that we can attain salvation after death, provided we have led a virtuous life in this world. The question arises: Can we not attain this state of transcendent consciousness in this very life? Can we not cross the portals of death during our life-time? To this, though the world says no, Guru Nanak assures us that we can. He himself realized it, and he teaches us how it can be attained.

For, unless the goal is reached while we are still living, where is the guarantee that it will be reached after death? From the Guru's writings, it is obvious that he could go beyond the gates of death and come back as often as he liked. This is how he put it:

Again and again do I die and again and again do I come back to life.
Such is the method which my Guru hath taught me.³⁶

This ability to cross the portals of death at will is, indeed, common to all higher mystic teachings. The ancient Indian scriptures right from the time of the Upanishads testify to it.

If a man realizeth not his self during his lifetime, from life to life in a series of births and deaths must need he go.³⁷

And again:

If a man knoweth not his self during his lifetime, the ills that may be in store for him after death, he cannot even imagine.³⁸

The Muslim scriptures give the same counsel: "Before thy death do thou die."³⁹

Rumi exhorts thus: "Rise thou, O Soul, and come thou up before thy death: and behold thou thy Kingdom and thy eternal Home."⁴⁰

The process involved in realizing this transcendent experience is analogous to the process of dying. That is why Guru Nanak called it "Dying while living." In death, the soul-current gradually withdraws from the body, starting from the extremities. The mystic in his spiritual practice and in his process of concentration aims at the same objective, but he does it voluntarily. The ordinary man's death, on the other hand, is an event over which he has no control. Moreover, it is painful, and there is no reverse process, for he cannot come back to life. But, as it has already been pointed out, the mystic has mastered the method or technique of conquering death. Thus Guru Nanak says: "Where thou hast to go after death, O conquer that realm while living."⁴¹ "Such a yoga do thou practise, O Nanak, that thou diest even while living."⁴²

A voluntary death of this kind, which means an ascent into higher spiritual realms, gives release from bondage, the bondage of sorrow and the bondage of reincarnation. One who dies or merges into the *Shabd*, stresses Guru Nanak, dies eternally from this phenomenal world, and will know no second death. This truth has been emphatically brought out not only by Guru Nanak, but even by other mystics. In regard to this, Rumi has to say: "Of dying before death the secret is this that after such a dying divine blessings dost thou receive."⁴³

And another writes: "If before any death dost thou die, this dying shall bear fruit."⁴⁴

Nor is this assertion confined to the mystics of the East. For even Jesus Christ says: "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."⁴⁵

Socrates has said in his epistles that he could come out of his body and go back into it as a man comes out of a house and enters it again. And this gave him intense bliss and peace.

The finite contains the Infinite. The transcendent Absolute is screened in flesh and blood. The Supreme Being is concealed in the human body. This fact is constantly repeated in Guru Nanak's teachings.

In the body resideth He Himself, the transcendent Divine Being, but the gross-headed man of the world knoweth it not, and seeketh Him outside.³⁶

As the scent is in the flower, and the reflection is in the mirror, so is God within thee. In thine own body do thou seek Him, O brother.³⁷

By the grace of the Guru do thou behold that within thyself is the temple of God.³⁸

When Guru Nanak says that God is within man, he does not mean that He is a part of the physical frame of man. Otherwise, medical men would have found Him at the time of dissection. But God is subtle and spiritual. Thus although He is inside us, by killing the body we do not kill Him. The death of the mortal frame does not touch Him, for He is transcendent. In fact, God is no part of our body for the same reason as He is not to be found in the material world. By saying that He is within us, Guru Nanak meant that we could realize Him by concentrating within ourselves.

It is a well-known principle in psychology that the organ of knowing must be suited to the object of knowledge. For instance, our eyes cannot see in the light which is too bright or too dim. Similarly, our ears cannot hear sounds which are too loud or too low. For sounds below the threshold or above the range of our ears, we use scientific instruments which make the sounds audible. Similarly, we use the microscope or the telescope to see very minute or distant objects. Now, this happens on the same plane of experience, viz., the physical world. If we wish to know something on the subtle plane, we have to become subtle. The Absolute Reality is extremely subtle and, therefore, to know it we have to recede within our subtle, transcendent self.

Guru Nanak said that phenomena conceal from our view the essence of Reality. The Upanishads state that *maya* or illusion hides from us the fact of Brahman. We have to pierce through the cover of phenomena or the veil of *maya* to be able to behold the Reality beneath.

Moreover, when Guru Nanak says that God is within us, he does not mean that He is not without. But by saying that He is within, Guru Nanak means that unless we realize Him within, we cannot know Him outside. So the difference between the introvertive and extrovertive mystic experiences is not so absolute as some of the Western thinkers have taken it to be. As has already been said, the extrovertive type is only secondary and is, in fact, dependent on the introvertive kind of mystic consciousness.

Mystics might differ in minor details of their accounts of mysticism, but all great mystics are unanimous in their estimate of the need and the role of a guru or enlightener. They all agree that in the entire spiritual process culminating in the realization of God, the guru or the living master plays the crucial role. Without him the desired end is impossible of attainment. In fact, a mystic school is not to be judged by its tenets or principles of belief only, but essentially by its adept and his internal spiritual reach.

To learn any ordinary skill or art, two factors are needed: effort and direction or method. If we wish to reach a destination, we can never reach it unless we move, and if we want to learn an art, we cannot learn it unless we practise it. The same is true of the mystic transport. Without effort and practice, the transcendental experience cannot be attained.

But, mere hard work itself is not enough. Unless the effort is made in the right direction and along the right lines, it will not only be futile, but may prove positively harmful. Suppose we have to reach a railway station, and we begin moving and moving fast, but if we have taken the opposite direction, the more we move, the farther we go from our destination. Now, many an ardent seeker has the intense desire to know the Reality, but he knows not the proper method. Thus Guru Nanak said: "They worship, but they know not the way."³⁹ If for a commonplace task, a teacher or a guide is necessary, he is much more so for treading the spiritual path, which is not only different from any, which the traveller has known, but is also beset with many a dangerous pitfall. A Persian mystic writes:

Dye thou thy prayer-cloth in wine, if thy master asks thee to do so,
for ignorant is he not of the ways and customs of the path which he
hath traversed.⁴⁰

And Jalal-ud-Din Rumi has given a more elaborate account in this context:

Find thou a guide, for beset with perils and dangers is this journey.
Whosoever without a master journeyeth on this path, the Evil Ones
lead him astray and cast him into the well (of misery). If thou hast
not over thy head the protecting hand of thy master, devilish doubts
shall for ever keep thee perplexed. Many a man wiser than thou art
has tried to tread the path by himself, but has come to grief through
the evils of Satan.⁴¹

Guru Nanak says that the fact that we are still subject to the cycle of birth and death and suffer ceaselessly shows that by our own efforts alone we cannot liberate ourselves. He writes:

If by ourselves could we attain union (with God), why should we have
suffered the pangs of separation? (Nay) only through mystics do we
realize Him, O Nanak, and experience the rapture.⁴²

This decree was ordained by the Almighty Himself. For, continues Guru Nanak: "Without *Satguru* none can obtain *Nam*, the Lord hath himself thus designed."⁴³

The indispensability of the living master is again and again emphasized in Guru Nanak's writings:

Let no one remain in delusion in the world ; without the Guru no one shall ever go across (the ocean of phenomena).⁴⁴

Say thou, O Nanak, God hath revealed this to thee: Without a guru no one can attain salvation, O brother.⁴⁵

Without a gracious guru none can find the Lord, even if one were to perform millions of actions.⁴⁶

This love and reverence for the master is no less intense in the mystics of Persia. This is what Shams-i-Tabriz writes:

If seekest thou the sight (of God), apply thou the collyrium of the dust of their feet, for even to the one born blind do they give eyes.⁴⁷

Having quoted profusely from various scriptures to show how indispensable the spiritual teacher is for God-realization, we may now try to arrive at the definition of a true guru. A true guru is one who has in his spiritual transport realized the Ultimate Reality, and who can enable others to attain that Reality. He is, thus, a necessary instrument for mystic realization and serves as the key which will open the locks of mystic transport in the seeker. Guru Nanak brings out the role of the guru thus:

Guru is the key, man the lock, mind the chamber and body the roof. Without the Guru the mind's door cannot be opened, O Nanak, and none else hath the key.⁴⁸

The Guru through his mystic experience has become one with God and has, as it were, merged in Him. This union and identification of the two, as has been stated earlier, is the definition of the highest mystic consciousness. On this, Guru Nanak writes:

God hath put Himself in the Guru.⁴⁹

Again:

God and His mystics are one, in this have (thou) no doubt ; as the wave riseth above the water and mergeth into it again.⁵⁰

This merging of the master in the Lord has been beautifully expressed in the following lines of Shams-i-Tabriz:

The Almighty Lord had put Himself behind strongly fastened locks. He then put on the garb of man to come and open the door Himself.⁵¹

Finally, as a criterion of a perfect guru, Guru Nanak says that such a one does not only enable a seeker to realize God within himself, but that he does so through the instrument of five *shabds* or divine melodies. In the monistic philosophy of Guru Nanak, which teaches the all-pervading *Shabd* as the source of all creation and as the One Reality behind all appearances, a reference to five *shabds* seems to need an explanation. The only way this contradiction could be resolved is that although in the last analysis the *Shabd* is one all-pervading, yet in the mystic transport it passes through five stages and takes on differing forms. It is like the course of a river, which has a different character at its source, in the high mountains, in the valley below, in the vast plains, at the delta and ultimately in the ocean into which it falls. Just as the same water assumes different forms at the various stages of its course, so also the *Shabd* which passes through various spiritual realms, assumes different forms. However, one who has to know the entire course of the river must know all the changes it undergoes in the geographical terrain through which it passes. So also the perfect master must be familiar with all the changes which the *Shabd* undergoes in the spiritual realms through which it passes. Thus Guru Nanak, in elaborating the definition of a true guru, writes:

Who showeth us our Home within us is a true guru. And, the ringing and resounding of the 'Five Melodies' is the sign of the reverberating *Shabd*.⁵²

This reference to five melodies is not confined to Guru Nanak or even to Indian mystics. A Persian mystic writes about it thus: "In silence listen thou to the five melodies coming from Heaven, but beyond these six is that seventh heaven."⁵³

The question of the relationship between mysticism and morality may be divided into two parts—the philosophical and the historical or sociological. The philosophical problem is: What is the source of ethical rights and duties? The mystic claims that the ultimate source of ethical value lies in mysticism itself. The word "source" is used here in the psychological rather than in the logical sense. This theory maintains that mystical experience is that part of human experience from which moral feelings flow. The second problem is concerned with the actual influence which mysticism tends to have, or actually has had on living a good life. Does it serve as an incentive to the leading of a noble life or does it serve as an escape from its responsibilities?

The basis of the mystics' claim that the mystic experience is the source of all ethical values rests on the assertion that in such an experience the separateness of the individual selves is abolished. And it is the feeling of separateness which produces that egoism which is the source of much evil—conflict, avarice, aggressiveness, selfishness, hatred, malice and the like. The necessary emotional counterpart of the separateness of the selves

is that basic hostility which is characteristic of Hobbes' view of the inherent selfishness of man. On the other hand, the natural emotional counterpart of mystic consciousness is love, for there is no separateness of you and I or you and he and that we are all one in the Universal Self. And love, according to this theory, is not only the sole basis but also the sole command of morality. In the rapture of love, Guru Nanak exclaims: "Say, whom shall we call good or bad, when all creatures are Thine?"

An objection could be raised against this theory. The vast majority of men do not profess to have attained the mystic experience. In fact, most of them are quite sceptical of it. And yet, such men do not only exhibit love and unselfishness but, in general, lead highly ethical lives. How is this to be explained in terms of the ethical theory based on mysticism? Is there not a gap in the theory? The theory explains this by holding the view that ethical feelings arise from an infiltration into their normal consciousness of some faint mystical trappings which remain latent in men but which influence their feelings and lives without their knowing or understanding it. Thus if a debased man exhibits in his life any feelings of affection, sympathy or kindness, these must have their source in the mystical side of his nature. Such a mystical sense perhaps lies far below the threshold of his surface consciousness. Thus to make the theory complete, it must be held that but for mysticism, whether latent or explicit, there could not be love or even mere kindly feeling in the human life.

Moral action sometimes seems to be motivated by a sense of duty rather than by the feeling of sympathy or love for those whom it is intended to benefit. Kant, for instance, is of the view that a sense of duty is the only genuine source of morality. But he, it seems, did not make a proper analysis of the moral motives. For whatever Kant may have thought, it would seem that the sense of duty must ultimately be rooted in sympathetic feelings. Towards the suffering of those who are in close proximity, a sensitive man will feel intense sympathy. But, as the distance increases, the emotional feeling of the man will decrease proportionately. In the case of a wide social reform, such as the abolition of slavery, the initiator cannot visualize the individual sufferings of the numerous distant men whom he hopes to benefit. Since personal feelings of sympathy are impossible, it may be that the man must act on the principle of duty. The principle, adequately stated, would be: One should treat all individuals, even those who are wholly unknown to him, as if he felt personal love for them. The principle is a rational extension of the feeling which is possible because "reason is universal and is independent of proximity or distance, whereas feeling is particular and local." The point at issue is that a cruel and cold man, who is incapable of the feeling of love — if such a man could exist — would also be bereft of the sense of duty which so impressed Kant. This sense of duty is itself rooted in genuine love and sympathy, and is a kind of indirect or rationalized form of it.

It may, therefore, be said that love and compassion are necessary and

immediate accompaniments of mystical experience. But this is not sufficient to establish the mystical theory of ethics. What is required to be shown is not only that love flows from mystical consciousness, but that it is the only source from which love flows into the world. It must be the sole fountain of love. It will not do to show that mysticism is one of the several sources from which love comes into men's hearts.

It seems to be impossible to prove this thesis. Men seem to love, for instance, their children or friends, quite naturally and without being aware of any mystical elements in their natures. Even animals feel love for their young and act altruistically towards them. Now, it would look fantastic to attribute the feelings of love in a horse or a dog to mysticism. And yet Plato propounds this theory in some of his *Dialogues*. For instance, in the *Republic* he suggests that the 'Good,' the *summum bonum*, is that which every soul possesses as the end of all her actions, dimly divining its existence, but perplexed and unable to grasp its nature.⁵⁴ In the *Symposium*, Plato suggests that in all living beings, including birds and beasts, the desire for procreation could be traced to the urge for making themselves immortal through generation, because "Love is of the immortal... and generation always leaves behind a new existence in place of the old."⁵⁵ Thus, the source of all appetition in men as well as in animals is hunger for the immortal, the Good, the One.

Thus, the mystical theory of ethics maintains that all love, whether in men or animals, arises from the mystical experience, either explicit or latent. The mystical theory, then, supposes that mystical experience is latent in all living beings, but that in most men and all animals it is profoundly submerged in the unconscious. However, it throws up influences above the threshold in the form of feelings of sympathy and love. These feelings partially break down the barriers which separate the two individual selves. And, if this breakdown were complete, it would lead to an actual identity of the 'I' and the 'he.' Love, therefore, may be considered a dim groping towards that disappearance of the individual into the Universal Self. We normally do not recognize our feelings of love as mystical, because "the experience of the union of all separate selves in the one Cosmic Self is hidden from most of us in the abyss of the subliminal."⁵⁶

Let us now turn to the second question: What influence has mysticism actually had on living a good life? The commonest moral accusation against mysticism has been that it functions in practice merely as an escape from life, and its active duties, into an emotional ecstasy of bliss, which is selfishly enjoyed for its own sake. Thus, mysticism is denounced as a mere flight from life and from the urgent work of the world. This charge has particularly been levelled against Indian mysticism by the Western critic.

This reflection, on the whole, is based on a misunderstanding, and one can meet the criticism effectively. In the first instance, it may be noted

that it has consistently been the practice of the Indian mystic to pass on the torch from man to man through the instrumentality of gurus and *ashrams*. Thus, he does not remain in solitude, unaffected by the suffering of others, but he seeks to show them the path of salvation, which he has found. As a teacher of what he conceives to be a good life, he cannot be called selfish. Second, the Indian mystic has a different set of values. To him, spirituality is of far greater value than the satisfaction of material needs or even the alleviation of material suffering. Hence, to pass on the torch of spirituality to other men is regarded by the Indian mystic as the supreme altruistic action. And last, there is perhaps a basic difference in the philosophic approach of the Indian from that of the Westerner. The men of the West think that it is theoretically possible to alleviate, if not altogether remove, material misery through schemes of social reform. But according to the Indian mystics, such as Guru Nanak and the Buddha, suffering is inherent in life and cannot be removed by any action so long as the individual retains his separateness from the Ultimate Being. Guru Nanak says: "The whole world is suffering, O Nanak. He alone is blessed, who resteth on the Name."⁵⁷ Suffering is a consequence of finitude, and will, therefore, persist so long as the finite does not merge into the Infinite.

It has been a common assumption that mysticism is a religious phenomenon. And this assumption is not unjustified, if we understand by the religious feeling, the feeling of the holy or the divine. For the mystic refers always to the timeless or the eternal which he experiences to be also supremely noble, transcending altogether the transient world of flux, vanity, frustration and sorrow. And, there goes with it that peace, which is beyond understanding. Hence, in this sense, mysticism is rightly regarded as religious in essence.

But, if we take religion to be a creed or a set of dogmas or an institution, then mysticism need not be religious. Thus considered, Plotinus was a non-religious mystic. The intellectual framework in terms of which he interpreted his experience was a system of philosophy and not religion. Even Buddhism in this sense is not religious, because it does not refer to the experience of the undifferentiated unity as 'Union with God.' Mysticism does not favour any one particular creed or world religion more than another.

Instead of asking whether mysticism is essentially religious, the question may be raised whether all religion is essentially mystical. It can reasonably be answered that most of the world religions and all the well-established Indian religions are essentially mystical, because their source and centre is the enlightenment experience. It seems these religions were originally mystic schools. However, in the course of time, true and practical mystics disappeared, and along with it the mystic practice was abandoned.

Guru Nanak's advent was marked by the resurgence of the true religious

spirit in India. Before he arrived on the scene, men's minds had been enclosed in the rigid framework of rituals and ceremonies. Groups and factions based on different sets of dogmas and creeds had emerged. Divisions had arisen between various classes of people. Religion which was supposed to bring out the best and the noblest in man had produced the contrary. No wonder, many had become sceptical, if not contemptuous of all that religion stood for. Nanak came and revived the faith of man in man and the faith of man in God.

Aristotle once said of his great master: "Plato is too high for the mean to praise him." Can this verdict not apply to our estimate of Guru Nanak? We often praise him as a great social reformer. We give him credit for producing communal harmony. We attribute to him the abolition of caste distinctions. Guru Nanak no doubt achieved all these to a great extent, but these were incidental results which flowed from his great teachings. He was much greater than what we give him credit for. Those who came into contact with him imbibed his teachings and followed his instructions. He gave them insight into the nature of the Ultimate Reality. He gave them vision of the Supreme Being. He made them realize, not merely intellectually, but in personal experience of the Divine that the all-pervading One resides within all men, and that all differences among them are merely apparent and superficial. He gave them that depth of knowledge through their mystic consciousness that the very feeling of separateness became an illusion. After such an insight, what scope remains for conflict and aggressiveness? What room is left for malice, hatred and selfishness?

After the departure of a great master from this world, there is always the lurking fear that with the passage of time, his message will get diluted, polluted or even altogether forgotten. I cherish the hope that this will not happen in the case of Guru Nanak, and that the torch of his light will never get extinguished. Let me end with this humble prayer: Give us, O Lord, the wisdom to correctly understand his teachings, and the strength to put them into practice.

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XXIII

INDIAN SUFISM AND GURU NANAK

S. A. A. RIZVI

Sufism represents the esoteric or mystic aspects of Islam ; it is speculative as well as a way of life. Cutting across the boundaries of mind and intellect, it seeks to make a direct experience of Reality and the Ultimate Unity of all existences on a plane of spiritual consciousness. It imposes self-denial and psychical self-discipline of the highest order on the followers of the Sufi path. Some Quranic verses,¹ and traditions of Prophet Muhammad provide the foundations upon which the Sufis built the superstructure of their thought and practices. Thus Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, popularly known as Mawlana ("our Master") Rum (A.D. 1207-1273), says :

Know that the words of the Qur'an have an exterior (sense) and under the exterior (sense) an interior (sense), exceedingly overpowering ; And beneath that inward (sense), is a third interior (sense), wherein all intellects become lost.

The fourth interior (sense) of the Qur'an, none hath perceived at all, except God the peerless and incomparable.

In the Qur'an do not thou, O son, regard (only) the exterior: the Devil regards Adam as naught but clay.

The exterior (sense) of the Qur'an is like a man's person, for his features are visible, whereas his spirit is hidden.

A man's paternal and maternal uncles (may see him) for a hundred years, and of his (inward) state may not see (so much as) the tip of a hair.²

The Sufis describe their path as *Tariqa*. The mutual relationship between it, and the formal Islamic law and outward practice (*Shari'a*) is expressively put by an Indian Sufi of the thirteenth century :

Shari'a is cloud and *Tariqa* is rain ; *Shari'a* is a tree and *Tariqa* is its fruit ; *Shari'a* is external and *Tariqa* is internal ; it is possible to follow *Shari'a* without seeking the help of *Tariqa*, but *Tariqa* without *Shari'a* is impossible. *Shari'a* amounts to the decorating of the exterior and the *Tariqa* means the adorning of the interior.³

In their writings, the Sufis seek to show that their system is the true Islam, but that their beliefs transcend all outward forms of religion.

They define faith (*iman*) as "the absorption of all human attributes in the search of God."⁵ Purification and prayers are imperative for the fulfilment of the obligations of true faith, but the Sufis tell us that "the method of spiritual purification is to reflect and meditate on the evil of this world and to perceive that it is false and fleeting, and to make the heart empty of it. This result can be attained only by much self-mortification and the observance of external rules of discipline (*adab-i-zahir*) assiduously in all circumstances."⁵

"Annihilation of the lower self (*nafs*)" and "perfect contemplation"⁶ are essential elements of Sufi prayers. Sufi pilgrimages are not confined to a visit to the Ka'ba, but demand the "contemplation of God" which, according to them, "resembles the vision of God in the next world."⁷ Hujwiri (Data Ganj Bakhsh), the most outstanding Sufi of the eleventh century, who wrote his *magnum opus*, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, at Lahore, says:

But whoever seeks his spiritual station must renounce familiar associations and bid farewell to pleasures and take no thought other than that of God (for his looking towards the phenomenal world is interdicted); then he must stand on the *Arafat*⁸ of gnosis (*ma'rifat*) and from there set out for the *Muzdalifa*⁹ of amity (*ulfat*) and from there send his heart to circumambulate the temple of Divine purification (*tanzihi*), and throw away the stones of passion and corrupt thoughts in the *Mina* of faith, and sacrifice his lower soul on the altar of mortification and arrive at the station of friendship (*khullat*). To enter the bodily station is to be secure from enemies and their swords, but to enter the spiritual station is to be secure from separation (from God) and its consequences.¹⁰

In the early centuries of Islam, the Sufis led an ascetic life, of self-denial, poverty and detachment. Their life was geared to the spiritualization of Islam from within; they tended to resolve conflicts in the metaphysics and ethics of formal religion through their own intuition, not through reasoned argument.¹¹ Gradually, the impact of the mysticism of the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and Mahayanist Buddhists and the influence of Iranian, Syrian, Greek and Roman cultures and traditions transformed Sufism into a complex system.

Between the ninth and twelfth centuries of the Christian era, political upheaval and social turmoil plunged the Islamic world into confusion, and profoundly affected the development of Sufism. The Turks acquired ascendancy in Iran, and a rival Caliphate was set up in Egypt; everywhere the political, and even the moral, authority of the 'Abbasid Caliphate was weakened, and men began to seek new formulas in which to express the realities of a political and social situation far more intricate than in the early centuries of Islam.

The first important figure in the history of speculative Sufism was Bayazid Bistami (died A.D. 874), a Persian Muslim of Zoroastrian ancestry, who spelled out his mystical experiences without any mental reservation.

He used the same word for them (*mi'raj*, "ascent"), as described Muhammad's journey to the Seven Heavens.¹² He is said to have observed:

I went to Mecca and saw a House standing apart. I said, 'My pilgrimage is not accepted, for I have seen many stones of this sort.' I went again, and saw the House and also the Lord of the House. I said, 'This is not yet real unification.' I went a third time, and saw only the Lord of the House. A voice in my heart whispered, 'O Bayazid, if thou didst not see thyself, thou wouldst not be a polytheist (*mushrik*), though thou sawest the whole universe; and since thou seest thyself, thou art a polytheist, though blind to the whole universe.' Thereupon, I repented, and once more I repented of my repentance, and yet once more I repented of seeing my own 'existence.'¹³

Husain bin Mansur Hallaj (A.D. 857-922) courted and obtained martyrdom by openly professing his mystical ravings, declaring *ana al-haq* ("I am the Creative Truth"). Junaid of Baghdad, on the other hand, who died A.D. 910, sounded a note of warning to Sufis, advocating sobriety in their ecstatic experiences. The teachings of Hallaj and Junaid are the sources of two divergent streams in Sufism, and attempts to bring them together in later years met with little success; however, it was Hallaj who appealed to the majority of Sufis.

'Abd-al-Qadir Jilani (A.D. 1077-1166), the founder of the Qadiriya order, directed Sufism into more practical channels. At fifty-one, after many years of austere penances and severe mystic discipline, he married and took to preaching and teaching. He advised Sufis to live in the world and inculcate righteousness in men; for although men are admitted to heaven or despatched to hell in accordance with their deeds, the Divine mercy will always help them in any noble act they may do.¹⁴ Mystic intuition reveals Divine majesty (*jalāl*) and beauty (*jamāl*) and overwhelms the dialectics of reasoning.¹⁵

The contribution of the outstanding religious thinker Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111), enhanced the prestige of Sufism among the Muslim élite and silenced its critics. In his *magnum opus*, *Ihya' 'Ulum-al-Din*, he drew upon a very wide range of human experience and demonstrated that the knowledge which physicists, astronomers and rationalists sought to disseminate did not look beyond the phenomenal world and was, therefore, undependable. The soul is a mirror able to reflect Reality; without it, spiritual life is barren, and true happiness is unattainable; Sufis are urged to polish the "mirror," removing the veils cast on it by worldly life and allowing the soul to return to its "true home."¹⁶ In one of his works, Ghazali concludes:

Since all the causes of love are combined in God and in Him alone, He alone is worthy of true love, a pure and all-absorbing love, which leaves no room for the love of anything else.¹⁷

In his *Ihya' 'Ulum-al-Din*, answering some subtle questions relating to love, he writes:

The Prophet once asked ; 'O Lord, who are Thy lovers?' and the answer came: 'Those who cleave to Me as a child to its mother: those who take refuge in the remembrance of Me as a bird seeks shelter of its nest: those who are as angry at the sight of sin, as an angry lion who fears nothing.'¹⁸

Infinitely controversial but of far-reaching importance was Ibn 'Arabi's¹⁹ theory of the transcendental Unity of Being, or oneness of Being, *Wahdat-al-Wujud*. He reinterpreted earlier theories on the Unity of Being and made his the last word on the subject. He and his followers brought all their scholarship and energy to bear upon a restatement of the theory of the Perfect Man. According to them, the Perfect Man is "a man who has fully realized his essential oneness with the Divine Being in whose likeness he is made."²⁰ In the literature produced by them, prophets are not the only perfect men; saints and eminent holy men, too, have been made the repositories of 'Divine Reality' and 'Divine Illumination.'

With such minds at work on it, the ideological and philosophical foundation of Sufism passed beyond the range of the ordinary Muslim's understanding. However, two things made Sufism a popular movement; its monastic life, and its mystic poetry.

From the eleventh century, the various Sufi orders arranged themselves on monastic lines. Christian and Buddhist monasticism was still alive on the western and eastern fringes of the lands where Sufism flourished, and perhaps influenced some aspects of communal life among the Sufis. In all Sufi orders, members lived lives of poverty and abstinence — at least to some extent — and were supervised by their *pir* (preceptor) and his senior disciples. The offerings dropped by the pious into the alms-basket²¹ (*zambil*), as it was carried around, and the unsolicited gifts presented at the *khanaqah* (the communal abode) were the sole source of support for all orders except the Suhrawardis, which, as we shall see, allowed its members to earn and accumulate money. Everything received was supposed to be shared by all of the inmates of the *khanaqah*.

These *khanaqahs* that received many gifts used to maintain a free public kitchen (*langar*) to which the poor of the town and visiting peasants from the villages were welcomed; people flocked to the *langars* not only for a free meal,²² but for the sake of a blessing from a well-known local saint, and perhaps a few words of worldly advice. Merchants, rich men, nobles and even the Sultan himself used to attend upon that most eminent of the saints, and literature always represents the Sufis as exerting their influence on the great to alleviate the misery of the poor.

Most Sufis used to travel for years before finally settling down in a

khanaqah, and they were mature men with much knowledge of the world. Their advice or counsel was, therefore, all the more valuable.

Abu Sa'id bin Abi'l Khair (A.D. 967-1049) was at the head of a long line of Sufi poets whose concept of goodness and beauty, identical with 'pure good' and 'the real beloved,' made Sufism appear in humanitarian guise, intensely concerned with human hopes and fears. Each of his quatrains expresses a single mystical thought:

Said I, 'To whom belongs thy Beauty?'
He replied, 'Since I alone exist, to Me;
Lover, Beloved and Love am I in one,
Beauty, and mirror, and the eyes which see.'²³

And again:

By whatsoever path, blessed the feet which seek Thee;
Blessed is he who strives to meet Thy beauty;
Blessed they who on it gaze,
And blessed every tongue which Thee doth greet.²⁴

The sayings ascribed to him, always a favourite theme of Sufi discourses, covered a very wide range of human behaviour and sought to answer the challenges thrown at Sufism by the contemporary spiritual movements.

They described to him how one holy man could walk on the water, how another could fly in the air, and how a third could in the twinkling of an eye transport himself from one city to another. 'The frog can swim and the swallows skim the water,' he replied; 'the crow and the fly can traverse the air and the Devil can pass in a moment from the East to the West. These things are of no great account; he is a man who dwells amongst mankind, buys and sells, marries, and associates with his fellow-creatures, yet is never for a single moment forgetful of God.'²⁵

One famous Sufi poet claimed that every single verse he wrote was as important as a whole book on Sufism;²⁶ he was Shaikh Saif-al-Din Bakharzi, a disciple of Shaikh Najm-al-Din Kubra, who in 1221 died at the hands of the Mongols as they burst into Khwarazm. The fact that so extravagant a statement could be made and repeated shows how deeply people were stirred by mystic poetry.

The depredations of the Ghuzz tribes of Turkomans in the middle of the twelfth century and the ravages of the Mongols from 1220 onwards filled the Muslim world with horror. Poetry and religious thought were deeply affected. Farid-al-Din 'Attar (died A.D. 1230), Jalal-al-Din Rumi and Sa'di (1184-1291), who wrote amidst all this strain and stress, tinged their poetry with a very high moral colour and sought to diffuse a message of hope relieving the sufferings of mankind and levelling differences dividing man from man. Rumi describes the real nature of the

prophetic mission in the following message of God to Moses, who had taken offence at the prayer of a shepherd using a commonplace form of address to God:

A revelation came to Moses from God — Thou hast parted My servant from Me.
 Didst thou come (as a prophet) to unite, or didst thou come to sever?
 So far as thou canst, do not set foot in separation.
 Of (all) things the most hateful to Me is divorce.
 I have bestowed on everyone a (special) way of acting;
 I have given to everyone a (peculiar) form of expression.
 In regard to him it is (worthy of) praise; and in regard to thee it is (worthy of) blame; in regard to him honey, and in regard to thee poison.
 I am independent of all purity and impurity, of all slothfulness and alacrity (in worshipping Me).
 I did not ordain (Divine worship) that I might make any profit; nay, but that I might do a kindness to (My) servants.
 In the Hindoos the idiom of Hind (India) is praiseworthy;
 In the Sindians the idiom of Sind is praiseworthy.
 I am not sanctified by their glorification of Me;
 'tis they that become sanctified and pearl-scattering (pure and radiant).
 I look not at the tongue and the speech; I look at the inward (spirit) and the state of feeling.
 I gave into the heart (to see) whether it be lowly, though the words uttered be not lowly.
 Because the heart is the substance, speech (only) the accident; so the accident is subservient, the substance is the (real object).
 How much (more) of these phrases and conceptions and metaphors?
 I want burning, burning; become friendly with that burning!
 Light up a fire of love in thy soul, burn thought and expression entirely (away)!²⁷

The Indian Sufis followed, broadly speaking, the pattern of development that had evolved in Persia. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Lahore and Multan were the rendezvous of many eminent Sufis and poets, but towards the end of the twelfth century, Baha-al-Din Zakariya' (died A.D. 1262), who founded the Suhrawardi order in India, settled in Multan and relegated the fame of Lahore to the background.²⁸ He did not take much interest in the common people, such as those who flocked to the *khanaqahs* of the Chistis at Ajmer, Ajodhan (Pak Patan), and Delhi.

The Indian Sufis met challenges, both internal and external. Internally, the ideologies of the Suhrawardis and the Chistis were opposed to each other in such matters as serving the government, *sama'* (song-hearing, ecstasy occasioned by hearing song or music) and the mode of exhibiting reverence to spiritual guides.²⁹

Meanwhile, the wandering dervishes, known as *qalandars*, some of whom possessed profound mystical attainments,³⁰ ruthlessly condemned all *khanaqah* life, roamed from place to place, and through magic and occult practices had the effect of merely stirring up confusion.

The Muslim scholastic classes, collectively styled '*Ulama*, offered strong

opposition to the Sufis, using their influence over the administrative machinery of the State to harass them. They denounced the ascetic life of the Sufis as un-Islamic, and opposed their practice of arousing a state of ecstasy through music (*sama'*). The Sufis followed the rules of the *Shari'a* in their mystic journey (*tariqa*), but only as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. They ruthlessly condemned the worldly life of the '*Ulama* claiming that they blindly followed a well-trodden path. Their learning, piety and worship were designed to earn them money, not to save their souls. Their prayers, fasts and pilgrimage were mere mechanical acts, serving no purpose.

Shaikh Jalal-al-Din Tabrizi was an eminent disciple of Shaikh Shihab-al-Din Suhrawardi (A.D. 1144-1234) and a contemporary of Baha-al-Din Zakariya'. Once, on his way to Bengal, he told Kamal-al-Din Ja'fari, *qazi* of Badaun, that when Sufis offered prayers they found themselves facing God, while the '*Ulama* could never see God but only turned their face towards the direction of Ka'ba.³¹ Nothing could more strongly and succinctly display the difference between the mind of a mystic and the mind of an '*Alim*.

Externally, the confrontation of the tantrics, sadhus and siddhas, represented in Persian works by the general term Yogis, and the Sufis became a familiar phenomenon in the thirteenth-century religious life in India. The *khanaqah* of Shaikh Farid-al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar (died A.D. 1265) was subjected to fertilization and cross-fertilization by the philosophy and practices of the Yogis. Not even a Sufi so eminent as Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya (died A.D. 1325) could remain uninfluenced.

He says:

Once I was in the service of the great Shaikh (Farid-al-Din) at Ajodhan (Pak Patan). A Yogi came there, I asked him, 'What principles do you follow? What is the essence of your discipline?' He said, 'According to our discipline there are two worlds ('*alam*) in the person (*afs*) of a human being; one is the world of bliss ('*alam-i-ulwi*), the other is the world of physical forces ('*alam-i-sufli*). From the crown to the navel, the higher world prevails; from the navel to the toes, the lower. The mechanism of our discipline is based on the principle that the sublime world is the embodiment of righteousness, polish, good manners and fair dealing. The lower world demands control, purity and chastity.'³²

Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya listened with attention to the magical and mystical aspects of sex mysticism,³³ as explained by a Yogi visiting the *khanaqah* of Shaikh Farid-al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar.³⁴ Another disciple of Shaikh Farid asked a Yogi, who was a guest in the *khanaqah*, to prescribe him drugs for growing long hair.³⁵

From the tenth century of the Christian era, Sufis had made breath-control (*Pranayama*) an essential part of their discipline. From the thirteenth century on, it began to make a deeper impact on Indian Sufis. Shaikh Nasir-al-Din Chiragh-i-Dihli (d. A.D. 1356) deemed it an indis-

pensable part of Sufi meditation. Like the Yogis, he attached great importance to the inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath.³⁶ The occult power acquired through the *Hatha-Yoga* by the Yogis appealed to the Sufis as well as to others,³⁷ but the works ascribed to Gorakhnath, who possibly flourished in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, gave new life to the Vedic teachings of *Ekam sat, vipra bahudha vadanti* (the Absolute Reality is One, the wise call it by many names). This must have provided Nath Yogis and Sufis with a common theme of discussion.

The Hindi works said to have been written by the disciples of Gorakhnath frequently use Arabic and Persian words, and sometimes use them in the Sufi sense. A group of Nath Panthis preached that all the apostles and prophets were disciples of Gorakhnath; so even Prophet Muhammad had been brought up and trained by their Master. Several of the Muslim syncretic movements which emerged in the fifteenth century, such as the Madaris in the western U.P. and the Jalalis in Sind, used the legends of Gorakhnath³⁸ as a framework for their system of discipline.

The influence of Sufism on the various regional languages and dialects of northern India, then collectively known as Hindawi, was far-reaching. Through Hindawi music there penetrated into Sufism the subtle message of the Vaishnavite *bhakti* with its popular symbols. Shaikh Farid-al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar seems to have conversed in the local dialect of Hindawi with the Yogis who used to visit the *khanaqah*. He is thought to have composed Hindawi³⁹ verses and the *Guru Granth* incorporates 112 of his *slokas* which fact, however, remains to be proved conclusively that they were his work.⁴⁰

Hindawi songs were regularly recited at the *sama'* of many Sufis. A Shaikh, Ahmad Naharwani,⁴¹ who attended the *sama'* of such eminent Sufis as Shaikh Qutb-al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (died A.D. 1235), recited melodious Hindawi songs.⁴² By the end of the fourteenth century, if not before, Hindawi verses came to be quoted in the gatherings at mosques. The *Chanda'in* of Maulana Dawud of Dalmou⁴³ (Rae Bareilly), which gives a head-to-foot description of the beauties of its heroine, was popular with all classes of Muslims. Mulla 'Abd-al-Qadir Badauni, the celebrated historian and 'Alim of Akbar's reign, says:

In 772H (A.D. 1370) Khan-i-Jahan, the *wazir*, died; and his son Juna obtained that title. Maulana Dawud wrote in his honour *Chanda'in*, a *mathnawi* in Hindawi, relating the story of the love of Lorak and Chanda. It is a very touching piece, indeed, and too well known to need praise. Even Maulana Shaikh Tazi-al-Din, a godly preacher (*wa'iz-i-rabbani*) used to recite its verses from the pulpit. It had an indescribable ecstatic effect upon the audience. When certain learned men asked the Shaikh why he chose that *mathnawi* for his discourses, he replied, 'the whole of it is Divine Truth and is not only agreeable to the taste of the people who are interested in Divine love, but it is compatible with the interpretation of some verses of the Qur'an. Even now street-singers of India captivate the heart by reciting it.'⁴⁴

Maulana Dawud sees the bow of Arjuna in heaven, but finds that the eyebrow of Chanda excels it. As she walks, men prostrate themselves before her and find that their sins have been washed away. *Rishis* and gods, such as Indra, Brahma, Visnu, Murari and Gandharwa were infatuated by her.

The authentic literature of the Chishti Sufis shows that Khwaja Muin-al-Din Chishti and his disciples down to Shaikh Nasir-al-Din Chiragh-i-Dihli took little interest in converting non-Muslims to Islam. Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya' used to say that the company of the righteous, not preaching, would change the heart of the Hindus.⁴⁵ By the middle of the fifteenth century, the attitude of some Chishti saints had changed. Mir Saiyid Muhammad Gesu Daraz (died A.D. 1422) wrote that Ibn-al-'Arabi, 'Attar and Rumi were the enemies of Islam;⁴⁶ he engaged the Brahmins in debates to prove the superiority of Islam and claimed to have defeated them.⁴⁷

Political changes in Persia were the main cause of this perceptible change in the attitude of the Indian Sufis. The conversion to Islam of Ghazan Khan (ruled A.D. 1295-1304), the Ilkhanid ruler of Persia, was an event of far-reaching importance throughout the eastern lands of Islam. It was followed by a wave of persecution of Buddhists, Christians and other non-Muslims in Persia. Both the *Ulama* and the Sufis took the credit for converting him.

Shaikh 'Ala-al-Daula Simnani (A.D. 1261-1336), an eminent Sufi and 'Alim, who for some time had served the Ilkhanids, was a zealous missionary. A considerable number of his followers visited India and tried to force the Indian Sufis to become Muslim missionaries. Muslim Sufis and scholars from India began to visit the re-Islamized courts outside India. Some Indian Sufis were influenced by the Persian orthodoxy, but Sufism, incompatible as it was with rigidity, did not in India allow orthodoxy to undermine its essence.

In the fifteenth century, the introduction of the Shattari and the Qadiri orders into India, the approach of the Islamic millennium, and the impact of the north Indian *sants* (saints) who tried to synthesize the traditions of the Vaishnavite *bhakti*, the Nath Yogis, and the Sufis, transformed Sufism into a complex pattern.

The Shattaris, who traced their origin from Shaikh Bayazid Bistami, reoriented their founder's traditions concerning the quest for the Absolute Truth and rapturous infatuation with the Divine love. Shaikh 'Abd Allah Shattari (died A.D. 1485), after travelling through many Islamic countries, finally settled down in Mandu, the capital of the Sultans of Malwa. He introduced the movement into India, but it owes its popularity to Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth (died A.D. 1562-63). The Shattaris popularized the invocation of the names of God (*Da 'wat-i-Asma'*) as a means of gaining spiritual power. The Hindi poetry produced by the followers of this

order promoted interest in Hindu mythology and in the works of the Indian saints.

The approach of the Islamic millennium accounts for the success of the Mahdawi movement and further popularity of the ideologies of Ibn-al-'Arabi which Shaikh Aman of Panipat (died A.D. 1550-51) preached with exuberant imagination.

The Qadiri order, firmly introduced into India in the fifteenth century, flourished in Multan and Uch and, subsequently, in Lahore. From about 1450, Saharanpur, Panipat and Multan became important Sufi centres.⁴⁸

The use of the local dialects, both by the Sufis and the *sants*, made ideas such as Absolute Reality, Creative Truth, faith in the love and grace of God and the equality of mankind popular with all sections of the population of northern India. An idea of the crystallization of the new movement can be formed through the study of the *Rushd Nama* of Shaikh 'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi (died A.D. 1536-37). He assumed the name of Alakhdas in the *dohas*, *slokas* and *sabads* which he composed. In these he uses the name *Alakh Niranjana* ('Imperceptible God') for his *sa'in* (Lord) whom no earthly power can see, and gives the status of Perfect Man to Gorakhnath. In a *sabad* he writes:

O Pundit, die, for death is sweet,
But yours should be a death like Sri Gorakh's.⁴⁹

The new trends, despite the opposition of the orthodox sections, made *Thakur*, *Dhani* and *Kartar* synonymous with Allah.⁵⁰ The *sant* and the Sufi terminologies became interchangeable and the term Sufi became coeval and coexistent with the term *sant*.

The fame of Kabir,⁵¹ who occupies a very important place among the *sants* of northern India invested the Sufi concept of a *muwahhid*⁵² (monotheist) with a special significance.

Once Shaikh Rizq Allah asked his father, Shaikh Sa'd Allah, 'Was the famous Kabir, whose verses everyone recites, a Muslim or a *kafir*?' His father said, 'He was a *muwahhid*.' Shaikh Rizq Allah further asked, 'Is a *muwahhid* different from a *kafir* or a Muslim?' Shaikh Sa'd Allah replied, 'It is difficult to understand this truth, you will gradually learn it.'⁵³

Guru Nanak belonged to this group of distinguished *muwahhids*, whose spiritual experience transcended the orthodox Hindu and Muslim idiom. In his early life, he was inquisitive beyond his age, was given to profound meditation and was exceedingly humane. His critical acumen and balanced judgement helped him to carve out an outstanding place for himself in an environment overflowing with mystical thought and spiritual attainments. As he belonged to a literate family, neatly placed in the service of the Afghan governors of the Punjab, he must have listened to verses of Rumi, Sa'di, Hafiz and Jami in his own home environment and

the thoughts of the great mystic poets would have aroused his interest in Divine love, grace and mercy. As his understanding of the Supreme Being matured and his experience increased, he felt himself endowed with a sort of Divine inspiration which made his thought pattern unique and gave him a serene self-confidence.

The saints (*sants*) and Sufis did not discriminate between the names of God, calling Him both Rama and Rahim; but Guru Nanak went much further. Convinced of the infinite grace of God, he urged:

There is neither Hindu nor Musalman.

In those days only one who was endowed with a faith as strong as a prophet's could dare utter such words, and at about the same time a Brahmin of Lucknow had to pay with his life for declaring that Islam was as true a religion as his own.⁵⁴

Later on, the Guru stated that:

Neither the Vedas nor the Semitic texts know the mystery (of God).

In fact, Guru Nanak does not denounce Islam or Hinduism as such, but condemns everything that has come between Islam and Hinduism, as he saw them, and their basic reality. In Guru Nanak's view, only the Reality and the Creative Truth have any importance, the literal meanings of the Vedas or the Qur'an are of no help. They are not necessarily to be rejected, but the essence of the Divine Truth should not be considered to be confined to them alone. It is God's grace that makes men holy, as these hymns clearly say:

Neither the Vedas nor the Semitic texts know the mystery (of God);
 And, lo, He neither hath father nor mother, sons nor brothers,
 And creating the high mountains razeth them;
 O, no one can fathom our Fathomless Lord,
 I have befriended Him and Him,
 But no one purgeth me of my evil, my sins;
 Our God, the Master of angelic beings, is at the Head of all;
 And blest with His love one is rid of all one's fears.
 He leadeth the strayers on the path,
 And strayeth them He too, and then maketh them wise in His wisdom.
 And, lo, there's naught but the Lord's Name,
 Through which alone one is emancipated and knoweth the way.
 The Ganga and the Yamuna, where Krishna sported, and Kedara too,
 And Kashi and Kanchi and Dwarka and Puri, and Gangasagara, and
 the Triveni,
 Yea, the sixty-eight holies are all merged in His Being.
 He Himself is the adept, the seeker and the man of contemplation,
 And Himself is He, the King, and He, who constitutes the councils of five.
 And Himself He sitteth on the throne to judge with justice,
 And to rid men of their fears and doubts.
 He Himself is the *qazi*, Himself the *mullah*:

Yea, He alone doeth no wrong and strayeth never.
 He it is who is the compassionate Lord of all, and the enemy of none.
 He, whom He forgiveth, He blesseth him with glory,
 For, He giveth to all, and Himself coveteth nothing;
 And filling all, He upholdeth all, and is yet detached:
 Oh, He is the One who is both manifest and unmanifest all over.⁵⁵

He urges that the effort to seek Him in places of worship and centres of pilgrimage is futile. He is hidden 'within' the searcher and only a true Guru directs him to the right path.

They wander the whole world through: but Thou, O God, art hid within them.
 The Guru's Word is the jewel, and it is through its light that Thou art seen.
 He, who knoweth himself, he, through the Guru's wisdom, mergeth in Thy truth.
 And 'coming and going' is for those showmen, who have made God a plaything:
 But they, who're pleased with the True Lord, praise eternally their only God.⁵⁶

In the same strain the Sufis ask their disciples to seek Him in their own hearts, for the heart is the seat of the Divine grace.

Guru Nanak in his hymns frequently criticizes Shaikhs, Qazis, Mullas, Yogis, Siddhas and Pandits, but not without reservations. Only those who were hypocrites and who did not care what they did were the targets of his attack. Such persons did not know the spirit of their own religion, were themselves misguided and led others astray. He says:

The Yogi is in his postures; the Mullah hath his own seat:
 The Pandit recites the Books; the Siddha sits in the temple of gods.
 But the gods and the Siddhas, the worshippers of Shiva,
 The heavenly musicians, the men of silence,
 The Shaikhs, Pirs and men in command, have all left;
 The others too are all awaiting their turn.
 Of the kings, the chiefs, the rich, the mighty, no one remains.
 A brief moment or two, and then we pass away;
 O my mind know thou, that thou must also leave.
 The Word reveals this, but rare the one who knows,
 That the Lord pervadeth the earth, the waters and the interspace; so
 Nanak prays.
 He is the Allah, the Unknowable, the Unfathomable, the Creator, the
 Cause, the Beneficent.
 All the world cometh and goeth and only the Lord of Mercy stays.
 He is that over whose head is not the writ (of death).
 The skies and the earth will pass away; yea, the One alone will remain.
 The sun and the day, the moon and the night, and myriads of stars
 will go.
 Yea, the abode of the One alone always stays:
 Hear thou O man, for Nanak speaketh the Truth.⁵⁷

Nanak's 'Home' is no different from Ghazali's, and all the eminent Sufis lament their separation from that 'Home.' The Guru turns to the subject more forcefully in the following hymn.

Neither angels, nor demons, nor men,
Nor Siddhas, nor seekers on the earth (will remain).
The Lord alone is, no other save Him is there, O none:
O He alone is, yea, He the One.⁵⁸

The above hymn is a profound Sufi commentary on the Qur'anic verse:

Everyone on it passes away —
And there endures for ever the person of thy Lord, the Lord of glory
and honour.⁵⁹

The Sufi literature uses these verses to demonstrate the concept of Divine Unity and does not use them merely to show that the world is not permanent.⁶⁰ Guru Nanak's intense faith in monotheism is the keystone of the structure of his thought. Elsewhere, in a style different, but characteristic, he says:

The One Lord pervadeth the three worlds.
He's the only Beneficent God, age after age;
Yea, there's not another.
And as is His will, so doth He keep us all.
I seek but to praise Him,
For, he blesseth us with honour and glory.
I keep awake (to Thee) if such be Thy Will, O God.
And when Thou unitest me with Thyself, I merge in Thee.
O Lord of the universe, I proclaim Thy victory ever.
Yea, through the Guru's instruction, one meeteth with Thee, our only
God forsure.⁶¹

In their attempt to philosophize the above ideas, Sufis have tended to become pantheists, but Guru Nanak adheres remarkably to his monotheism. A similar success was achieved by only a few Sufis, such as Shaikh Hamid-al-Din Naguri (d. A.D. 1274), who says:

According to the religion of love, it is *shirk*⁶² to utter the word I, for love obliterates duality. Lovers do not recognize the distinction between 'I' and 'You.' Love is fire, the place that catches fire consumes everything dry or wet, sparing neither any wood nor musk.⁶³

Although Guru Nanak's God is both immanent and transcendent, his complete rejection of duality takes him nearer to those Sufis whose approach was devotional rather than speculative. He offers his devotion to the Supreme Being alone; not to one of His incarnations. Thus he is at once a Sufi and a *muwahhid sant*. He says:

Brother, the world is in woe, for it is engrossed in duality.
 If one seeks the protection of the Guru,
 One attaineth peace and meditates on the Name for ever.
 The true ones are not soiled in mind,
 Their pure minds dwell on the Lord alone.
 Through the Guru, they realize the Word,
 And they immerse themselves in the Lord's Nectar-Name.
 The wisdom of the Guru burns bright in them
 And the darkness of their ignorance is dispelled.⁶⁴

Likewise Shaikh 'Abd-al-Quddus Gangohi recommends that the word 'dual' should never pass the lips of a pious man.⁶⁵

The most profound exposition of the Unity of God in the Qur'an is this, which every Muslim repeats in his prayers:

Say: He, Allah, is One.
 Allah is He on Whom all depend.
 He begets not, nor is He begotten:
 And none is like Him.⁶⁶

Many Sufis have written commentaries upon this chapter; but Guru Nanak explains it admirably:

Unknowable is my Lord, infinite, unfathomable, imperceptible,
 Who dieth not, nor is bound to the writ of *karma*.
 His caste is castelessness; He is incarnated not, is self-existent,
 He's neither lured away by doubt nor by attachment.
 I am a sacrifice unto my True Lord,
 Who hath neither form, nor colour, nor sign,
 And is revealed only through the True Word.
 He hath neither father, nor mother, nor sons,
 Nor kindred, nor wife, nor lust.
 Without family, immaculate, transcendent is the Lord,
 And His light pervadeth all.
 In all hearts is hid the Lord;
 Yea, all hearts are illumined by the light of the Lord.
 When, through the Guru's Word the adamant doors (of the mind) are
 flung open,
 One is attuned to one's Fearless Lord.
 The Lord created all creatures and made them subject to death,
 And over all is the sway of the Lord.
 Yea, he, who serveth the True Guru, attains his life-object.
 And is emancipated by living the Word.
 In the clean vessel is the (Lord's) Truth contained,
 But how many are clean (from within)?
 Yea (when the Lord willeth), the light of the individual soul
 Mergeth in the light of the Oversoul;
 And so Nanak seeketh the refuge of his Lord, the God.⁶⁷

Guru Nanak seeks to give a complete answer to the complex problem of prayer by urging men to remember God's name both alone in their hearts and in the company of others. Nicholson says:

In Mohammedan mysticism, it is prayer that supplies the best evidence of personality, not the ritual prayer (*salat*), but free prayer (*dua*), and in particular the loving converse with God (*munajat*) when the mystic speaks out of the depths of his heart.⁶⁸

All Sufis begin to seek a state of mystic recollection through *dhikr* (repetition of the name of God, whether loudly, softly or in the mind) or through *sama*, but the *munajat* comforts all Muslims. Guru Nanak's *Japji* is a most outstanding devotional hymn and the reader who understands it finds himself transported to a strange world of bliss.

Guru Nanak's theology assigns a very high place to the 'True Name,' and the Sikh scholars have written thought-provoking commentaries on the subject. Muslims believe that a sort of mystery and God's name are linked together. He is assigned ninety-nine names, called the Most Beautiful Names. Muslim devotees whisper these names, often with the aid of a rosary of ninety-nine beads. Some eminent Sufis discourage mechanical repetition, however, and Rumi warns:

God has called Himself *Basir* (seeing), in order that His seeing thee may at every moment be a deterrent (against sin).
 God has called Himself *Sami* (hearing), in order that thou mayest close thy lips (and refrain) from foul speech.
 God has called Himself '*Alim* (knowing), in order that thou mayest fear to meditate a wicked deed.

These are not proper names applicable to God: (proper names are merely designations), for even a negro may have the name *Kafir* (camphor).⁶⁹

Of the ninety-nine names, it is believed that one is the *Ism-i-A'zam* (The Great Name). The Sufi literature has taken great pains to search for that One name. Ibrahim bin Adham (d. A.D. 777), an outstanding ascetic—a Sufi who once asked about *Ism-i-A'zam*, said:

Keep your belly free from unlawful food; exclude the world from your heart; then whatever name you use to invoke Him will be *Ism-i-A'zam*.⁷⁰

In regard to invoking God, the attitude of the common Hindus and Muslims of Guru Nanak's day was nothing short of that of Moses in Rumi's *Mathnawi*, but the great Guru gives a clear lead in the following hymn:

Countless Thy names, countless Thy places, O Lord,
 Countless the spheres, beyond all thought.
 O count there cannot be,
 With words we name Thee, hymn Thee,
 With words all knowledge, all praise, all song,
 With words all speech, all writing's vogue.

With words we tell of our union with Thee.
 But Thou aren't subject to the words Thou wrote,
 'Tis we
 Who receive Thy Will be.
 Thy Name extends to all Thou createst,
 No place where Thou mayest not pervade,
 What power have I to tell what Thy excellence be,
 Sacrifice am I a myriad times unto Thee.
 That what pleaseth Thee is the only thing done,
 O Thou, the Eternal, the Formless One.⁷¹

According to the occasion or his audience or the nature of the message he wished to disseminate, Guru Nanak selected traditional terms used by Hindus and Muslims to invoke God, such as Allah, Khuda, Sahib, Hari, Rama, etc., but *Guru ka Sabad* or 'Guru's Word,' inexplicable and undefinable, is his *Ism-i-A'zam*. He warns:

Pilgrimages, austerities, mercy, charity,
 Bring but honour small and paltry.
 One must hear, believe, love the Name,
 And bathe at the sacred fount within one's frame.
 For worship there cannot be till virtues shine.
 So pray: 'Thine art all the virtues, Thine.
 O Primal Word, Maya, Brahma, hail to Thee.
 Thou that art Truth, Ever-Joy, Beauty.'
 What the time, the season, the day, the month of Creation?
 Knows none.
 Not the Pandits, even if it be in the text of a Puran,
 Nor the Qazi does who interprets the Qur'an.
 Nor the Yogi knows the date, the season, the month,
 But the One Who created the Universe, knoweth alone.
 How to describe Him, praise Him, speak of Him, know His best?
 Yea, say they all they know, orfe wiser than the rest.
 Great is the Master, great His Name.
 All that is, proceeds from Him.
 He, who thinks of himself much, is vain,
 And will look small in God's Domain.⁷²

A Sufi preceptor (*pir* or *murshid*) guides the life of his disciples into fruitful spiritual channels. As a hairdresser bedecks a bride, he promotes their spiritual interest,⁷³ protecting them from crises,⁷⁴ no wonder Sufis believe that one who has no guide soon falls under the spell of the devil, and advise their disciples to put themselves into the hands of their preceptors as corpses are entrusted to the care of the corpse-washers. Some Sufis claim to have obtained guidance from the spirit of a great Sufi long dead; others to have obtained divine guidance without any intermediary; so an illustrious deceased or the Supreme Being also occupies the place of a *pir*. In an interesting dialogue with some Yogis, Guru Nanak, who felt that his deep meditation had made him the recipient of God's grace, says:

From the air is the beginning: the age is of the true Guru.
 The Word is the Guru: and the mind attuned (to the Word) the disciple.
 I remain detached, being attached to the ineffable Gospel (of the Lord):
 Yea, my God is the Guru, age after age.
 It is the Guru's Word through which one reflecteth on the Gospel (of
 the Lord);
 Yea: thus doth the *Gurmukh* quench his (inner) fire.⁷⁵

And elsewhere:

The Guru's Word is the bride's decoration
 And, so decked, she surrenders herself to the Lord,
 And with joined palms she standeth waiting for Him
 And prays in all sincerity.
 Such is the bride of true colour, imbued with His Love,
 Decked in the glorious red and living in fear of the Lord.⁷⁶

The Sufic interpretation of the Divine Will (*Mashī'a*), and Guru Nanak's concept of *Hukam* answer a very wide range of questions relating to human consciousness and to the creative activity of the Supreme Being. For the last thirteen hundred years, the Muslim scholarly opinion has stood divided about the nature and scope of *Mashī'a* and many schools of thought have emerged, holding contradictory theories: Sufis interpret it as an aspect of God's infinite mercy and grace, a usual response to the yearnings of a loving heart. Ghazali says:

God invites His worshippers to pray in order that prayer may lead them to recollection and humility and self-surrender, which enlighten the heart and make it receptive of His revelation and mean a continuance of His loving kindness. This does not mean dissatisfaction on the part of those who pray, with God's Will for them, but just as lifting, up the water-jar and drinking its contents does not mean dissatisfaction with the thirst which God has decreed, for He has also decreed that water shall quench thirst — so also it is right to pray, for prayer is the means appointed by God for the satisfaction of man's spiritual needs.⁷⁷

In their interpretation of the Divine Will, the Sufi poets were eloquent and associated it with the *jamāl* (Divine beauty) of the Supreme. The teachings of Guru Nanak upon *Hukam* (*Mashī'a*) are comprehensive and broadly based. They incorporate some important interpretations of *Mashī'a* found in the Sufi poetry. It is enjoined upon every Sikh to recall daily his Guru's wide understanding of the subject, as found in the *Japji*.

True the Master, True His Name,
 Infinite Love His astrolabe.
 The seekers they all beg at His Door,
 And the Giver He gives but more and more,

What offer to make to see His Court?
 What words to utter to win His support?
 Meditate thou, in ambrosial morn, on the True Name, His greatness,
 glory.
 For thou a better frame of life is attained by good actions,
 Salvation comes through His grace, benediction.
 Know thou this, Nanak, that He, the True One, is all in all,
 (on Him, on Him, O let me call).⁷⁸

According to the Sufis, God Himself describes His creative activity as "I was a Hidden Treasure and I desired to be known; therefore I created creatures that I might be known." Shaikh Fakhr-al-Din 'Iraqi (died A.D. 1289), the son-in-law of Shaikh Baha-al-Din Zakariya' and a profound interpreter of the thoughts of Ibn-al-'Arabi, says:

The wine wherewith the cup they first filled high
 Was borrowed from the Saqi's languorous eye.
 Since self-possessed the revellers they found
 The draught of selflessness they handed round.

* * *

For good and bad a place within our hall,
 They found, and with one cup confounded all.
 They cast the ball of Beauty on the field,
 And at one charge compelled both worlds to yield.⁷⁹

In his *Lam'at* Shaikh Fakhr-al-Din 'Iraqi praises God:

Who illuminated the countenance of His friend with the effulgence of beauty, so that it gleamed with light; and made visible therein the limits of perfection; and rejoiced therein with joy; and raised him up by His hand and chose him out, while Adam was not yet a thing mentioned, nor had the pen written nor the tablet been inscribed. (His friend, who was) the Treasure-house of the treasures of Being, the Key of the Storehouses of Bounty, the *Qibla* of Desire and the Desired One, the Possessor of the Standard of Praise and Laudable Stations, the tongue of whose high degree declares:
 "Though in outward form I seem one of Adam's progeny,
 Yet the underlying truth claims for me paternity."⁸⁰

Shaikh 'Abd-al-Quddus Gangohi is simply re-interpreting verses in the *Lam'at* in (Persian and Hindawi) when he says that creation is God's mirror, which he made in order to contemplate His own Beauty.⁸¹ Guru Nanak repeatedly turns to the topic of the creative activity of God and explains it most beautifully:

There were no distinctions of colour, or creed,
 Or of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas.
 Neither there were gods, nor temples,
 Nor (the sanctity of) the cow, nor the recitation of the Gayatri.
 Nor the offering to the sacrificial fire, nor *Yajnas*,
 Nor pilgrimages, nor worship (of the gods).

There were neither the *mullahs*, nor the *qazis*,
 Nor the *shaikhs*, nor the *hajis*.
 Neither the kings, nor the subjects, nor the world of ego,
 Nor anyone prided on one's self.
 Neither there was loving adoration (of God).
 Nor consciousness, nor unconsciousness;
 Nor friends, nor mates, nor the ova, nor the sperm.
 And He, the Lord Himself was the merchant and Himself the pedlar:
 For, such was His Will.
 Neither there were the Vedas, nor the Semitic texts,
 Neither Smritis nor the Shastras, nor the reading of the Puranas;
 Neither the sunrise nor the sundown.
 He, the Lord, alone uttered Himself remaining unperceived,
 Knowing only Himself His unknowable self.
 When such was His Will. He brought the universe into being,
 And without a seeming contraption, upheld He its vast expanse,
 And created He also Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva,
 And instilled in men the ever-mounting desire for being attached.
 But rare is the one whom the Guru caused to hear His Word.
 For, the Lord gave the command and saw it happen and be all over.
 And (thus) He created all the universes and their parts and the
 underworlds,
 And from the Absolute Self He became manifest.
 O, no one knoweth the extent of my God:
 And 'tis only through the perfect Guru that He's revealed unto us.
 Sayeth Nanak: They who're imbued with His Truth
 Are inebriated with His Wonder:
 And thus wonderstruck, they sing ever His praise.⁸²

Rumi assigns a very high position to man in the hierarchy of creation: it is only just below that of the angels but man is endowed with the capacity to go beyond the realm of the angels. He says:

I died as a mineral and became a plant,
 I died as a plant and rose to be an animal.
 I died as an animal and I was a man.
 Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
 Yet once more I shall die as man, to soar with angels blest;
 But even from angelhood I must pass on:
 All except God doth perish.
 When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
 I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
 Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence
 Proclaims in organ tones: 'To Him we shall return.'⁸³

Some Sufis who did not care for the principles of Islam believed in the doctrine of incarnation (*hulul*) and *Kashf-al-Mahjub* gives a vivid account of their doctrines;⁸⁴ Rumi, though himself orthodox, did not remain uninfluenced by the doctrine of *hulul* and Islamized the transmigration and incarnation theories. Guru Nanak deals with the subject without any mental reservations. His Hindu beliefs do not impose any

restrictions upon him. He believed in transmigration and his ideas on the subject are not incompatible with the ideas of the Sufis of the unorthodox school in many places resembling Rumi's description of the spiritual ascent of man. The spiritual journey prescribed by Guru Nanak, which is similar to that of the Sufis, ends hopefully with the promise:

Yea, only if they have gathered merit,
The Lord will unite them with Himself.
Lo, then, one is separated not, if one is really united;
And then cease one's comings and goings:
Yea, such is the Truth of our Lord.⁸⁵

Guru Nanak's teachings are distinguished by a stern ethical tone and a practical approach to the problems of life. He rejects asceticism and advocates the leading of a normal life with piety and righteousness, always the Supreme Being in one's mind. He says:

He alone, O Nanak, knoweth the Way,
Who earneth with the sweat of his brow,
And then sharerth it with others.⁸⁶

This attitude brings him very close to those Indian Sufis who lived as petty cultivators, merchants or craftsmen, but who commanded the high respect of their compatriots. One of these was Shaikh Hamid-al-Din Nagauri (died A.D. 1274) who rejected all offers of support, public or private, and earned his living by working a small plot.⁸⁷ One of his successors, Khwaja Husain Nagauri, drove his own bullock-cart like a Rajput peasant and looked after his bullocks himself.⁸⁸ In Multan, not far from the region of Guru Nanak's activity, lived his contemporary Shaikh Husam-al-Din, the preceptor of Shaikh Ali Muttaqi (died A.D. 1567), a traditionist and scholar of great eminence; Shaikh Husam-al-Din, cultivated his piece of land himself and regularly paid revenue at the same rate as his peasant neighbours.⁸⁹ The *sants*, too, led a similar life, working as artisans or labourers but profoundly engrossed in meditation.

The true significance of renunciation, said Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya', does not lie in throwing away one's clothes, putting on a loin-cloth, and retiring into solitude. It demands that men should wear clothes, eat regular meals and distribute their spare belongings to the needy, neither accumulating wealth nor making any attempt to add to it.⁹⁰

In a similar strain, Guru Nanak says:

That in the midst of the household, one is emancipated.
Such service doth the servant render unto his Lord.
That he surrenders his life to the One to whom it belongs,
And accepts whatever is in the Will of his Lord:

Then, such a servant is accepted in the Court of God.
 He enshrines the image of the True Guru in his mind,
 And then whatever he wisheth for, unto that he attaineth.
 When the True Master is Merciful to him,
 One is afraid not of death.⁹¹

The above analysis of Guru Nanak's teachings in the light of Sufi thought should not be construed as an assertion that the great Guru borrowed his thought from the Sufis. It indicates that Guru Nanak, through his own deep meditation, arrived at the same conclusions as had already been reached by Sufis, such as Rumi, Sa'di, 'Iraqi, Jami and Hafiz. Guru Nanak presents his thoughts with remarkable consistency; some hymns in the *Guru Granth* read like portions of the *Mathnawi* of Maulana Rum, which Jami called "the Qur'an in Persian," but there is nothing to show that Guru Nanak was imitating Rumi.

As were his teachings, Guru Nanak's method of preaching was unique: it was at once revolutionary and soundly rooted in common-sense. By putting a few searching questions, or by violating some accepted social practice, he would prepare the minds of his audience to receive as a startling and agreeable novelty what he was about to say. The hymns in the *Guru Granth* confirm what the authentic Janamsakhis seek to present Guru Nanak as a perfect man in the Sufic sense, and the incidents from his life are selected to serve an instructive setting for his teachings. They are not biographies in the modern sense, but are hagiologies. They were written long after Guru Nanak's death.

The contemporary trends in Sufism offer us a clue to the proper understanding of the Janamsakhis. By the fifteenth century, a valuable corpus of Sufi literature had developed. It comprised the *mafluzat*, collections of letters, poetical works, biographies and works on the principles and practices of the Sufis.

The *mafluzat* (collections of discourses) is a literary genre unique to the Indian Sufis. The tradition began with Amir Hasan Sijzi, who compiled a chronological summary of the discourses of his master Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya' and entitled it *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad*. Subsequently, several scholars wrote down the discourses of other saints, but they could not surpass Amir Hasan. Writers of authentic *mafluzat* took great pains to summarize the discourses of their preceptors accurately, often submitting drafts to them for correction and revision. Doubtful points were verified by the authors in subsequent sessions, often they left blank spaces in manuscripts for the later elucidation of details which they did not understand. These were meant to be supplied by the preceptors themselves.

Before *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad* was written, about half a dozen works presenting the teachings and activities of early Chishti saints had already appeared. These works were ascribed to eminent Chishtis, such as 'Uthman Harwani, preceptor of Khwaja Mu'in-al-Din, and Khwaja

Mu'in-al-Din himself, Farid-al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, Qutb-al-Din Bakhtyar Kaki, and Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya'. The *Fawa'id-al-Salikin*, ascribed to Shaikh Farid-al-Din, *Asrar-al-Auliya'*, alleged to have been written by Maulana Badr Ishaq, a son-in-law of Shaikh Farid, and the *Rahat-al-Qulub* attributed to Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya', are quite detailed.⁹² These works pay little regard to the facts of history, topographical details and common sense; the supernatural elements in them are quite fantastic. Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya' and his successors rejected these works but the gullible ones continued to read and rely on them.

This literature, despite its lack of scholarly merit and theological depth, grew more and more popular. The credulous masses, ever reluctant to abandon their traditional reverence for saints, and inclined to believe their every act to be tinged with supernatural numinousness, were reluctant even to consider the rejecting of the legends which appeared to contribute to the awe in which saints were supposed to be held.

When, therefore, the Janamsakhis of Guru Nanak came to be written, the corpus of apocryphal tales about famous Sufis had grown to a great volume. More staggering was the mass of legends about the Tantrics and the Yogis, some of which had been compiled in the local dialects. No sober Sufi was interested in performing miracles; their attitude did not differ from Abu Sa'id Abi'l Khair's. They used the term *istidraj*⁹³ to express the supernatural feats of the Tantrics and the Yogis, as distinct from *karamat*.⁹⁴ The fabricated *mal'uzat* did not only pander to the credulity of the masses, but equipped them with the material to carry on a dialogue with members of a rival faith. Guru Nanak's hymns reflect the confusion in the minds of the people of his day.

The irreconcilable discrepancies in matters of fact, the unexplained lacunae in the narratives, and the occasional logical contradictions in the Janamsakhis are puzzling to historians; but the broad outline of the Guru's life, as presented in the authentic Janamsakhis, may be taken to have at least some basis in fact.

Sants travelled the length and breadth of India, whereas the Sufis constantly visited other parts of the Islamic world. It is not unlikely that Guru Nanak travelled throughout India and even crossed to Ceylon; the story that he visited Mecca, Medina, Baghdad and some other Sufi centres in Iraq, Persia, and modern Afghanistan is not impossible.

The attempt to disinter the "historical Nanak" is an interesting intellectual exercise, attempted by not a few scholars, the latest being W. H. McLeod. The fact remains, however, that the *Guru Granth* completed in its definitive form by Guru Arjan (1563-1606) is one of the primary sources for understanding Guru Nanak. Most of Guru Nanak's life fell within the reign of Bahlul Lodi and his dynasty (1451-1526). The earliest account of this age is the *Waqi'at-i-Mushtaqi*, a

collection of anecdotes, interesting as evidence of social history but not conspicuous for critical discernment; it is the work of Shaikh Rizq Allah Mushtaqi, completed sometime before his death in 1581. The board of scholars appointed by Akbar to write 1000 years of Islamic history from the death of the Prophet, admitted that they had not written history of the Afghan days;⁹⁵ they compiled their account of that age from the Mughal sources and from oral traditions. Nizam-al-Din Ahmad's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, completed in 1592-93, draws upon *Tarikh-i-Alfi*. Afghan historians who wrote under Jahangir's reign based their compilations on this *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* with occasional recourse to *Waqi'at-i-Mushtaqi* and anecdotes from members of old Afghan families. This material cannot be safely relied upon to refute the Janamsakhis, as some of the latter are contemporaneous with the Afghan histories of Jahangir's reign and fill many lacunae in the history of Guru Nanak's period.

In the fifteenth century, the Punjab enjoyed a peaceful period because of Afghan domination. The Mongol invasions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had devastated portions of the Punjab. The Afghans contributed to its resettlement and urbanization. They founded many new towns and promoted trade and commerce. Guru Nanak did not have any sympathy with Sultan Ibrahim Lodi but his heart bled at the renewed sufferings of the people of the Punjab which Babar's invasions brought in their wake. The Janamsakhis give a vivid account of the sack of Saidpur and the 'Babar-Vani' in the *Guru Granth* confirms it. The account fills a lacuna in *Babar Nama* which does not deal with Babar's minor raids in the Punjab and the sufferings of the people. Babar was interested in the Sufis and saints; he gives an account of his visit to the caves of Gur Khattari⁹⁶ and acknowledges the help which Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth Shattari gave him in the conquest of Gwalior.⁹⁷ He ignores Shaikh 'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi, who wrote him a letter urging him to rule strictly in accordance with the law of the *Shari'a*, so he omits the visit of Guru Nanak whose sermons, bitter though they were, Babar swallowed.

Some Sikh scholars have sought archaeological confirmation of Guru Nanak's journey; the attempt shows more enthusiasm than judgement. The better sort of Sufis and *sants* always shirked publicity; service to mankind was their aim, not personal glory. The inscription at Baghdad which is alleged by some to refer to the Guru, does nothing of the kind. It is Turkish.⁹⁸ Guru Nanak travelled to Baghdad to obtain first-hand knowledge of the centre of the Qadiri order of Pir-i-Dastgir Shaikh 'Abd-al-Qadir Jilani. He could not become interested in Bahlol. Guru Nanak, preoccupied with discovering and disseminating Truth, would not have cared to leave any material memorial of his presence: he did nothing of the sort in his own country. A study of Sufi sources helps us in solving many problems posed by the Janamsakhis. Many other Sufis and

Qalandars travelled to various places in the Islamic world. Makhdum Jahaniyan, Saiyid Jalal Bukhari, Ja'far-i-Makki, and Shaikh Jamali Kamboh are some of the well-known personalities who visited Hijaz, Iraq, Persia, etc. Guru Nanak, as a *muwahhid*, travelled widely and his visit to shrines such as those of Shaikh Sharaf-al-Din Abu 'Ali Qalandar of Panipat (died A.D. 1324), Farid-al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar of Pak Patan, Baha'-al-Din Zakariya' and his grandson Shaikh Rukn-al-Din at Multan, cannot be doubted.

The Janamsakhis speak as if these saints were alive when the Guru visited them; yet the authors and their readers and listeners knew that they had died centuries before the Guru's birth. Some scholars seek to explain away the difficulty by suggesting that at Panipat, Pak Patan, Multan and Baghdad there may have been some descendants with the same names as those of the great saints, and with them the Guru may have exchanged ideas. The suggestion is far-fetched and runs counter to the spirit in which the Janamsakhis were composed. It is a well-known Sufic belief that great saints do not die, and remain accessible to eminent saints of later days who can converse with them. Affifi, the well-known authority on Ibn-al-'Arabi, says:

His (Ibn-al-'Arabi's) own imagination was as active in his dreams as in his waking life. He tells us the dates when and the places where he had the visions, in which he saw prophets and saints and discoursed with them; and others in which a whole book like the *Fusus* was handed to him by the Prophet Muhammad who bade him 'take it and go forth with it to the people that they may make use thereof.'⁹⁹

Thus when the Janamsakhis describe Guru Nanak's conversation with the saints of the past, this should invariably be interpreted as a mystical experience or conversation with the spirits, though the words in the Janamsakhis might present it as two living persons talking to each other. To obtain experiences such as the above, a practised Sufi need not necessarily visit the shrines of the saints: spiritual intuition can enter his soul, wherever he may be.

Thus we need not believe that Guru Nanak actually ascended the legendary Mount Sumeru and discoursed with Gorakhnath.¹⁰⁰ The episode in the Janamsakhis is intended to present allegorically the meeting of two great saints who had parallel ideas. Likewise, the discussions recorded in the Janamsakhis between Guru Nanak and such *bhagats*, as Namdev and Jaidev, Kabir, Trilochan, Ravidas, Sain, Sadhna, Dhanna and Beni¹⁰¹ are intended to compare and contrast the teachings of Guru Nanak with those of the *sants* of the past, rather than to portray actual events.

The story of the Ka'ba moving in the direction in which Guru Nanak's feet were turned harks back to the Sufi belief that great saints need not circumambulate the Ka'ba: wherever they may be, the Ka'ba will appear before their eyes. In fact, the Sufis believe that eminent saints and pious

people themselves are the repositories of Divine Light, whereas the Ka'ba is only a structure composed of stones and rubble. Maulana Rum says:

Bayazid, on his journey (to the Ka'ba), sought much to find someone that was the Khizr of his time. He espied an old man with a stature (bent) like the new moon; he saw in him the majesty and (lofty) speech of (holy men);

His eye sightless, and his heart (illuminated) as the sun: like an elephant dreaming of Hindustan.

With closed eyes, asleep, he beholds a hundred delights; when he opens (his eyes), he sees not those (delights) oh, ('tis) wonderful!

Many a wonder is made manifest in sleep; in sleep the heart becomes a window.

One that is awake and dreams fair dreams, he is the knower (of God): smear your eyes with his dust.

He (Bayazid) sat down before him and asked about his condition; he found him to be a dervish and also a family man.

He (the old man) said, 'Whither art thou bound, O Bayazid?

To what place wouldst thou take the baggage of travel in a strange land?'

Bayazid answered, 'I start for the Ka'ba at daybreak.'

'Eh,' cried the other, 'what hast thou as provisions for the road?'

'I have two hundred silver *dirhems*,' said he; 'look, (they are) tied fast in the corner of my cloak.'

He said, 'Make a circuit round me seven times, and reckon this (to be) better than the circumambulation (of the Ka'ba) in the pilgrimage; . . .

Albeit the Ka'ba is the House of His religious service, my form too, in which I was created, is the House of His inmost consciousness. . .

Open thine eyes well and look on me that thou mayest behold the Light of God in man.'¹⁰²

The story also seeks to ridicule the preposterous pestering to which Arab touts subjected pilgrims to Mecca. The authors of the *Janamsakhis* knew nothing about the customs of Arabia and Iraq and looked to the pilgrimage-centre of the Punjab for descriptive passages. Even historians of the Mughal days,¹⁰³ when writing about the Delhi Sultans, often use Mughal administrative terms in preference to the correct titles, which by their time had fallen into disuse.

Trumpp¹⁰⁴ dismissed the visit of Guru Nanak to Mecca summarily. McLeod, in his interesting new book, points out:

The first of these three arguments is the significant one and it is an argument which must lead us very near to outright rejection of the tradition. Adventurers such as Burton and Keane have proved the possibility of non-Muslims entering Mecca, but they have also shown that success in such an attempt could be attained only by means of a thorough disguise, both in outward appearance and in behaviour. (R.F. Burton, *A Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Mecca*, vol. ii, J.F. Keane, *Six Months in the Hejaz*). Guru Nanak would doubtless have been sufficiently conversant with Muslim belief and practice to have sustained the disguise, but it would have been a violation both of his manifest honesty and of his customary practice of plain speaking.

The ban has, it is true, been applied with particular strictness during more recent times. It, nevertheless, existed during the period of Guru Nanak's travels and would certainly have prohibited the kind of open entry which the Janamsakhis describe.¹⁰⁵

The present author has seen no evidence, whether contemporary or nearly so, to suggest that in Guru Nanak's days non-Muslims were not permitted to enter Mecca. The *fatwa*¹⁰⁶ against going on pilgrimage issued by Makhdum-al-Mulk Mulla 'Abd Allah Sultanpuri in the early years of Akbar's reign indicates that because of the high-handedness of the Shi'as in Iran and of the Portuguese, it was not advisable for the Sunnis to visit Mecca, either by the land or the sea route. It must not be forgotten that Guru Nanak, like Kabir, was recognized as a *muwahhid* and did not belong to the class of non-Muslims, as such. He belonged to an altogether separate category.

Qalandars, *malamatis*¹⁰⁷ and *majdhubs*¹⁰⁸ frequently visited Hijaz. They dressed themselves in a fantastic and ludicrous manner; some *majdhubs* roamed about stark naked. It is said that Jamali took only two sheets of cloth on his travels; when he visited Jami, his body, barely concealed, was encrusted with dust. Guru Nanak's dress, as described in the Janamsakhis must have aroused the curiosity of his fellow-travellers, but his profound discourses on the Unity of God were sufficient to silence his critics. McLeod's views that Guru Nanak could not have visited Mecca without a 'complete disguise' have no bearing upon the conditions of Guru Nanak's days.

Guru Nanak's long and laborious journeys were not intended as pilgrimages; he condemned both Hindus and Muslims for regarding pilgrimage as a means of gaining religious merit. He seems to have travelled to obtain personal acquaintance with as many recognized centres of spiritual life as he could; and to spread his message of Divine Unity and Truth to different sections of mankind.

By appointing as his successor his talented disciple, Lehna (A.D. 1504-1552), rather than one of his own sons, he ensured both the continuation of the spiritual transmission of his message and a secure foundation for the broadly based organization which was to disseminate his teachings to wider and wider circles in the centuries to come.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Cf. Following verses of the Qur'an.
 "The righteous truly drink of a cup tempered with camphor.
 A fountain from which the servants of Allah drink, making it flow in abundance." (Ch. 76, Verses 5, 6).
 "So flee to Allah, surely I am a plain Warner to you from Him." (Ch. 51, Verse 50).

"And during part of the night adore Him, and glorify Him throughout a long night." (Ch. 76, Verse 26).

"Rise to pray by night, save a little." (Ch. 73, Verse 2).

"Nay! Obey him not, but prostrate thyself, and draw nigh to Allah." (Ch. 96, Verse 19).

"Thy Lord knows, indeed, that thou passest in prayer nearly two-thirds of the night, and (sometimes) a third of it, as do a party of those with thee. And Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that (all of) you are not able to do it, so He has turned to you (mercifully); so read of the Qur'an that which is easy for you. He knows that there are sick among you, and others who travel in the land seeking of Allah's bounty, and others who fight in Allah's way. So read as much of it as it is easy (for you) and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and offer to Allah a goodly gift. And whatever of good you send on beforehand for yourselves, you will find it with Allah—that is best and greatest in reward. And—ask forgiveness of Allah. Surely Allah is forgiving, Merciful." (Ch. 73, Verse 20).

"And certainly we created man, and we know that his mind suggests to him—and we are nearer to him than his lifevein." (Ch. 50, Verse 16).

"And in the heavens is your sustenance and that which you are promised." (Ch. 51, Verses 21-22).

The following verse has received the greatest attention:

"Allah is the light of the heavens and of the earth. A likeness of His light is a pillar on which is a lamp—is in a glass, the glass is, as it were, a brightly shining star—lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof gives light, though fire touch it not—light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom he pleases. And Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is knower of all things." (Ch. 24, Verse 35).

Translation of verses from Muhammad 'Ali: *The Holy Qur'an* (Lahore, 1951).

The following are some of the most important commentaries on the Qur'an from the Sufi point of view:

Al-Haqaiq Fi't Tafsir by 'Abdal-Rahman bin Musa al-Sulami al-Azadi al-Nishapuri (died A.D. 1021).

Lata'if-al-Isharat by Abu al-Qasim Abu al-Karim (died A.D. 1073).

'A Ara'is-al-Bayan fi Haqa'iq al-Qur'an by Muhammad Ruzbihan Baqli (died A.D. 1209).

Bahr al-Hada'id wa'l Ma'ani by Najm-al-Din Abu Bakr called Dayah (died A.D. 1258).

2. R.A. Nicholson: *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi* IV, 4 (London, 1930) p. 237.
3. Shaikh Hamid-al-Din Nagauri: *Surur-al-Sudur* (Aligarh Muslim University Ms., Habibganj Collections) p. 64.
4. R.A. Nicholson: *Kashf-al-Mahjub* by 'Ali B. Uthman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri (London, 1936) p. 289.
5. Ibid., p. 292.
6. Ibid., p. 303.
7. Ibid., p. 329.
8. A mountain twelve miles from Mecca, from which, among other ceremonies, the pilgrims make a procession to the Holy Monument situated on another mountain at a little distance.
9. Name of a place near Mecca, between Mount 'Arafat and the valley of Mina.
10. R.A. Nicholson: *Kashf-al-Mahjub*, pp. 326-327.
11. Cf. the biographies of Hasan of Basra (A.D. 642-728), Abu Hashim of Kufa (died A.D. 776), Ibrahim bin Adam (died A.D. 777), Shaiqi of Balkh (died A.D. 810), Harith Muhasibi (A.D. 781-857), Rabi'ah al-Adwiyah of

- Basra (died A.D. 801) and Dhu-al-Nun Misri (died A.D. 859) in *Kashf-al-Mahjub*, *Tadhkirat-al-Aulia* by Farid-al-Din 'Attar and *Nafhat-al-Uns* by Jami.
12. The Qur'an says: "Glory to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Mosque, whose precincts We blessed, that We might show him of our Signs! Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing." (Ch. 17, Verse 1).
 13. R. A. Nicholson: *Kashf-al-Mahjub*, pp. 107-108.
 14. Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad: *Futuh-al-Ghaib* by Hazrat Shaikh Muhyuddin 'Abdul Qadir Jilani (English Translation) Lahore, 1958, Discourse 27, pp. 87-92.
 15. Ibid., Discourse 9, pp. 36-38.
 16. Margaret Smith: *Al-Ghazali, The Mystic* (London, 1944) pp. 149-151.
 17. Ibid., pp. 149-151.
 18. Ibid., pp. 179-180.
 19. Born in 1165 at Murcia in the south-east of Spain and died in 1240 at Damascus. Of his works, *Futuhat-al-Makkiyyah* and *Fusus-al-Hikam* are the most important.
 20. R. A. Nicholson: *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1967) p. 78.
 21. There seems little doubt that the practice was adopted from the routine of the Mahayanist Buddhist monks, communities of whom survived in pockets in Central Asia and Kashmir until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They preserved the traditional custom of each monk going out every morning with his begging-bowl. The *zambil* was a "wallet" in the old sense of that word: a sort of satchel of leather, canvas, a basket, which hung by a strap from the shoulder and rested on the thigh.
 22. Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya' (died A.D. 1325) tells a story which shows how deep was the impression made even on the enemies of Islam by the charity of the *khanaqah*. During one of his raids, Chingiz Khan (1165-1227) captured a famous Chishti saint, Khwaja 'Ali, son of Khwaja Rukn-al-Din. When he was brought before the Khan, a follower of his order, one of the courtiers of Chingiz, resolved to save him from death, if he could. Knowing that an account of the fame and piety of the Khwaja and his ancestors would not save him, the courtier ventured to remark that he ought to be spared as his father fed many people. Chingiz asked: "Whom? His own people, or strangers?" The courtier explained how his father gave food to strangers; Chingiz mightily pleased, set Khwaja 'Ali free, apologizing for having incommoded him. (Amir Hasan Sijzi: *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, Bulandshahr, A.D. 1855-56, p. 20).
 23. Browne, E.G.: *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol. II. (Cambridge, 1964) p. 265; Khwaja Mu'in-al-Din Chishti, the founder of the Chishti order in India (died A.D. 1236) likewise urged that lover, beloved and love are identical, which means that in the sphere of *tahhid* everything is One. (Amir Khurd: *Siyar-al-Auliya*, Delhi, 1885, p. 45).
 24. *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol. II, p. 266.
 25. Ibid., pp. 268-269.
 26. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, p. 40.
 27. R. A. Nicholson: *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, Vol. II. pp. 311-312. According to Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya, someone gave a knife to his preceptor, Shaikh Farid-al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar (died A.D. 1265). Shaikh Farid gave it back to him and said, "Don't bring a knife to me; bring a needle to me. Knife cuts, while needle stitches." (*Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, p. 239).
 28. Until Sultan Shams-al-Din Iltutmish had defeated Nasir-al-Din Qabacha in 1228, Multan continued to flourish. The route from Persia through the Bolan Pass to India was very convenient for emigrants from Iraq and Persia, and Multan was the first great city they reached. All the authentic Sufi

- sources state that when Baha-al-Din Zakariya' arrived in Multan from Baghdad, all the eminent holy men of the town, envious of his celebrity, sent him a cup full of milk as a hint that the city was already overflowing with saints. But the Shaikh gently set a flower afloat on the milk, indicating that as the flower adorned the bowl without displacing the milk, so would he be an ornament to the town, without disturbing them. ('Abd-al Haq Muhaddith Dihlawi: *Akhbar-al-Akhyar*; Delhi, 1914, p. 27).
29. Thus the Suhrawardis accepted administrative posts and accumulated wealth, while the Chishtis led strictly ascetic lives. Music was an integral part of Chishti discipline; the Suhrawardis rejected it. The Chishtis allowed their disciples to perform *sajda* (prostration) before their *pirs*; the Suhrawardis forbade it.
 30. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, p. 7.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
 33. Benjamin Walker: *Hindu World*, Vol. II (London, 1968) pp. 390-391.
 34. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, pp. 258-259.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
 36. *Khair-al-Majalis*, Aligarh, 1959, p. 60.
 37. Ibn-i-Batuta: *Rihla* (Paris, 1893), pp. 35-41. Ibn-i-Batuta speaks of a Muslim disciple of the Yogis; he tells us that he had first seen them (the tantrics) in the Mongol court of Turkistan. They numbered fifty.
 38. Anonymous; *Dabistan-i-Madhahib* (Lucknow, 1904), p. 179.
 39. *Siyar-al-Auliya'* quotes a *doha* (verse) of Shaikh Farid-al-Din, p. 367.
 40. The great Shaikh was born in Kahtwal about A.D. 1175 and died A.D. 1265; gifted as he was, it is unrealistic to believe that throughout his long life, he composed only one verse. It is true that Shaikh Nizam-al-Din Auliya' never referred to the Hindawi verses of his preceptor, but this was because he was himself born in Badaun and lived mainly in western U.P. and Delhi and did not have any command of the Multani dialect of his Master. The *doha* of Shaikh Farid quoted by Amir Khurd is corrupt and is not easily decipherable. It is not unlikely that out of 112 *slokas* quoted in the *Guru Granth*, some *slokas* which were not actually composed by him had by that time come to be ascribed to the Shaikh. Nizami gives a list of the Arabic and Persian words used in the *slokas*, but says, "Shaikh Ibrahim, a contemporary of Guru Nanak, is probably the real author of these *slokas* and he has expressed in his own words some of the sayings of his great master." Nizami, K.A.: *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar*, (Aligarh, 1965), pp. 121-122. Nizami's arguments are unconvincing; perhaps some trained linguist might solve the problem.
 41. Nahrwali, belonging to Nahrwala, seems to be the correct reading.
 42. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, p. 187.
 43. Maulana Dawud was the disciple of Shaikh Zain-al-Din. According to *Akhbar-al-Akhyar*, Shaikh Zain-al-Din was a nephew and *khalifa* of Shaikh Nasir-al-Din Mahmud Chiragh-i-Dilhi.
 44. 'Abd-al-Qadir Badauni: *Muntakhab-al-Tawarikh* (Calcutta, 1865-69), Vol. I, p. 250.
 45. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, p. 196.
 46. Gesu Daraz; *Maktubat-i-Gesu Daraz* (Manuscript, Asiatic Society Bengal, Ivanow 1232), f. 19.
 47. *Jawami'-al-Kilam* (British Museum MS. Or 252) f. 216a.
 48. McLeod wrongly asserts: "In the first place, there is the fact that the Panjabi Sufism of Guru Nanak's period had evidently departed radically from the classical pattern of Arab and Persian Sufism." He thinks that

in the Punjab there were "some strict Sunnis" who "might fitly be described as Sufis" as if Sufism was compatible only with orthodox Sunni views. "The majority," he asserts, "would, however, represent in varying degree the blend of modified orthodoxy and debased Sufism which was dominant in the Muslim community of the Panjab during the period." (*Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968, pp. 158-159). *Akhbar-al-Akhyar* gives an account of a large number of eminent Sufis, who about this time, flourished in the Punjab, and its neighbourhood. Their contribution to Sufi thought is outstanding, and it would be incorrect to assume that the Sufi of the Punjab was debased, although it had developed a character of its own. Shaikh 'Abd-al-Quddus was the disciple of Shaikh Muhammad son of Shaikh 'Arif son of Shaikh Ahmad 'Abd-al-Haq of Rudauli. He is said to have obtained great benefit from the spirit of Shaikh Ahmad 'Abd-al-Haq, an eminent saint of Awadh. He spent thirty-five years of his life in Rudauli; in 1491 he migrated to Shahabad near Delhi and in about 1526 to Gangoh near Saharanpur, where he died in 1535 or 1537 at the age of eighty-four. He is the author of several works on Sufism, a large number of letters which he wrote to his contemporaries and which were subsequently compiled in book form. These letters cover a very wide range of topics, and were addressed to a variety of people including Sultan Sikandar, Babar and Humayun. From Gangoh to Thaneshwar, he and his disciples exercised considerable influence.

49. *Rushd Nama* (Jhajjar, 1897), p. 9.
50. *Siraj-al-Hidayat* (Conversations of Saiyid Jalal Bukhari), India Office Ms. D.P. 1038, f. 64 b.
51. *Dabistan-i-Madhahib* discusses Kabir in the chapter on the Bairagis and the followers of the Vaisnava Bhakti, but calls Kabir as an eminent *Muwahhid* (*Dabistan-i-Madhahib*, p. 200). The followers of the contemporary Vaisnavite Bhakti, according to *Dabistan-i-Madhahib*, exhibited considerable syncreticism. They claimed that synonymous with Bishun 'Abd al-Wahid Bilgrami, an outstanding Sufi of the sixteenth century, offers a spirited defence of the use of Vaisnavite Bhakti songs in the *Sama'* (Rizvi, S.A.A.: *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Agra, 1965, pp. 60-62). Hindi translation of *Haqiq-i-Hindi* by 'Abd-al-Wahid Bilgrami (Varanasi, 1957.) Original in Ahsan Collection, Aligarh University Library.
52. Ghalib, the celebrated Urdu poet (d. 1869) explains what a *Muwahhid* is in an interesting verse:
 "I (literal, we) am a *muwahhid*; I believe in renouncing traditional practices. When religious differences (literally religions) disappear, the (remaining) essence becomes the basis of the (one true) faith."
53. Shaikh Rizq Allah Mushtaqi, the uncle of Shaikh 'Abd al-Haq Muhaddith Dihlawi was born in 1491-92 and died in 1581. His father, Shaikh Sa'd Allah, was an eminent Sufi. Shaikh Rizq Allah grew up to become a Persian and Hindi poet and a devotee of the Shattari order (*Muslim Revivalist Movements*, pp. 149-151).
54. *Akhbar-al-Akhyar*, p. 300. The event occurred under Sultan Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517). The utterances of Lodhan aroused considerable resentment and the matter was reported to the Sultan, who was encamped at Sambhal (near Muradabad in western U.P.). The Sultan convened an assembly of the 'Ulama from Delhi, Sarhind and Kanauj to discuss the matter. After considerable discussion, the 'Ulama issued a declaration that Lodhan should first be imprisoned, and then asked to declare a firm belief in Islam. Should he refuse, he was to be executed. Their decree was obeyed; and Lodhan preferred to sacrifice his life rather than his faith. (Nizam-al-Din Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-*

- Akbari*, Calcutta, 1911, pp. 322-323).
55. Gopal Singh: *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (English translation), Vol. IV, p. 974 ; published Punjabi version, p. 1022. References to the Punjabi, hereafter, are abbreviated as A. G.
 56. *Guru Granth*, IV, p. 1231; A. G., p. 1290.
 57. *Guru Granth*, I, p. 60; A. G., p. 64.
 58. *Guru Granth*, I, p. 135; A. G., pp. 143-144.
 59. *The Qur'an*, Ch. 55, Verses 26, 27.
 60. *Rushd Nama*, p. 7.
 61. *Guru Granth*, III, p. 889; A. G., p. 993.
 62. Giving companions or partners to God.
 63. *Surur-al-Sudur*, pp. 38-39.
 64. *Guru Granth*, I, 31; A. G., p. 29.
 65. *Rushd Nama*, p. 7.
ek akela saiyān dui dui kaho na koi
bas phul mem ek hai ki keon duja hoi
 66. *The Qur'an*, Ch. 112, verses 1-4.
 67. *Guru Granth*, II, pp. 578-79; A. G., p. 597.
 68. Nicholson, R.A. : *The Idea of Personality in Sufism*, (Cambridge, 1923), p. 36.
 69. Nicholson, R.A. : *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin-Rumi* (Cambridge, 1930) IV. 4, p. 284.
 70. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'nd*, pp. 110-111.
 71. *Guru Granth*, I, pp. 5-6; A. G., p. 4.
 72. *Guru Granth*, I, p. 6; A. G., pp. 4-5.
 73. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, p. 31.
 74. *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 75-76.
 75. *Guru Granth*, III, p. 899; A. G., p. 943.
 76. *Guru Granth*, I, p. 52 ; A. G. p. 54.
 77. *Ihya'*, IV, p. 303 (summarized by Margaret Smith) *Al-Ghazali, The Mystic*, p. 96.
 78. *Guru Granth*, I, p. 2; A. G., p. 2.
 79. E. G. Browne; *A Literary History of Persia*, III (Cambridge, 1964), p. 126.
 80. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
 81. *Rushd Nama*, p. 2.
 82. *Guru Granth*, IV, pp. 988-989; A. G., p. 1036.
 83. R. A. Nicholson, *Rumi, Poet and Mystic*, (London, 1964), p. 103., Jami says:
 "Creation's book I studied from my youth,
 And every page examined but in sooth
 I never found therein aught save the 'Truth'
 And attributes that appertain to 'Truth'
 What mean Dimension, Body, Species,
 In Mineral, Plant, Animal degree?
 The 'Truth' is single, but His modes beget
 All these imaginary entities."
 - Lawa'ih* translated by E. H. Whinfield and M. M. Kazvini (London, 1928),
 p. 21.
 84. *Kashf-al-Mahjub*, pp. 260-266.
 85. *Guru Granth*, III, p. 698; A. G. p. 729.
 86. *Guru Granth*, IV, p. 1191; A. G., p. 1245.
 87. *Akhbar-al-Akhyar*, p. 30.
 88. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-184.
 89. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214.
 90. *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, p. 10.
 91. *Guru Granth*, III, p. 636; A. G., p. 661.

92. Mohammad (Muhammad) Habib: "Chishti Mystic, Records of the Sultanate Period," *Medieval India Quarterly*, Aligarh, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 15-17.
93. An obstinate sinner on whom numerous benefits had been conferred.
94. Miracle performed by Sufis.
95. *Tārīkh-i-Alfi* (India Office MS).
96. S. A. A. Rizvi: *Mughal Kalin Bharat — Babur* (Aligarh, 1960), pp. 109-110.
97. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.
98. V. L. Menage' in W. H. McLeod: *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 130-132.
99. A. E. Affifi: Ibn Arabi in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, I, Weisbaden, 1963), pp. 403-404.
100. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 120-121.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
102. R. A. Nicholson: *The Mathnawi*, IV, 2, p. 337.
103. Badauni gives an interesting anecdote about Shaikh 'Abd-al-Nabi; it illustrates the state of affairs in Mecca. In 1579, Akbar expelled Shaikh 'Abd-al-Nabi to Mecca, an Arab saw him at the port of embarkation and in keeping with the practices of touts, began to instruct him in the rites and ceremonies of pilgrimage. So much so, that the Shaikh was annoyed and said to the Arab that he was an 'Alim and knew all the rules and rites. His reply did not silence the Arab and he said, "But you don't have that smiling face which is the main characteristic of an 'Alim." (*Najat-al-Rashid*, India Office MS., Delhi. Miscellaneous 34, f. 136 b).
104. E. Trumpp, *The Adi-Granth*, (London, 1877), p. vi.
105. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 125.
106. 'Abd-al-Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab-al-Tawarikh*, Vol. II (Calcutta, 1265-69), p. 203.
107. The Malamatis were Sufis who followed the path of *malamat* (blame); they intentionally performed unlawful acts in order that people should begin to hate them and they might be able to devote themselves to meditation and prayers without being disturbed. (*Kashf-al-Mahjub*, 62-69, 183-184). Impostors who only pretended to be the *malamati* enjoyed respect.
108. Attracted by Divine grace and renouncing all worldly concerns

XXIV

A STUDY OF GURU NANAK'S TEACHING IN RELATION TO THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL TRADITION

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB

Evaluation and Synthesis of Indian Religious Thought in Guru Nanak

This paper will attempt to state the place of Guru Nanak in that long march of the spiritual evolution of the Indian people, whose beginnings are lost in hoary antiquity. This matter needs detailed discussion, as in the study of Guru Nanak and the Sikh religion, this particular aspect is generally given much less attention than is warranted by its overwhelming importance. In this connection, one or two things may be mentioned right at this point, since the discussion which follows is in a large measure their amplification.

Guru Nanak authentically belongs to the Indian spiritual tradition, and in his vision and teaching, the fundamental spiritual ideals which have given continuity to it are seen to provide the root and the dynamic force. Further, as an aspect of the proposition just stated, while he is seen to accept and orientate in certain directions these ideals, he at the same time brings into play a highly sensitive, evaluative attitude of the mind and the soul, whereby much that got associated through the millennia with the totality of the Indian religious tradition, without harmonizing with its spiritual core, is rejected or given a modified interpretation in fresh contexts. Even in the more purely spiritual aspects of this long tradition, such elements from primitive belief as were found to be agglutinated with it were cast off by him and only the genuine core of spiritual-idealistic thought was adopted as the basis of his own teaching.

1. All the renderings into English of the Sikh sacred writings and philosophical terms are by the writer of this paper.
2. Page-references are in each case to the *Guru Granth*, the sacred Scripture of the Sikh religion.
3. Transliteration of words and names from the Sanskrit and Arabic and other sources is in accordance with their enunciation in Punjabi-Hindi, and is not after the academic practice with regard to the respective languages.
4. The renderings, while not literal, attempt to convey also the literal point of the original, which is in most places also elucidated in the footnotes. The main effort has been to convey the sense and some part of the flavour of the original.

Further to amplify the terms of this thesis, Guru Nanak in formulating his vision and scheme of the spiritual-ethical life gave to the Indian religious tradition a dynamic and synthesizing character, so that it could now operate as a force for a very wide spiritual-ethical humanism, whose inner urge was directed towards the uplift of the vast masses left out by the older traditions. Here, we may try briefly to define what has above been called the synthesizing character of Guru Nanak's vision: He interpreted and broadened the preexisting spiritual idealism towards a deeper humanism and morality and at the same time purged it free from its constricting elements, such as the codified castes and other taboos. Encrusted with conservatism, the narrowing traditions, like the exclusivism of Sanskrit, and the priestly caste were rejected. Religion was given an overwhelmingly ethical direction, so that the significance of belief and practice was seen to be in proportion to its furthering the objectives of the ethical ideals. Wide humanism, as said earlier, was made an essential element in the ethical vision which, in the older tradition, had been confined to tribe, caste or race. Guru Nanak addressed his appeal for the search after such universal ethical values, as much to the Muslim folk as to those who could be described as Hindus of various denominations, including those branded untouchable and outcaste. The Muslim masses were comparatively recent converts from Hinduism, and like their Hindu counterparts were the working folk. They had no vested interest in the more imperialistic aspects of Islam as, in theory and practice, it had got evolved during the centuries of the Muslim conquests of various lands, and would be content to practise their faith in pursuit of some spiritual and moral guidance. The Muslim ruling classes, with their foreign extraction, along with the Hindu converts of the higher castes, had developed the feudal imperialistic mentality, and would naturally not be amenable to the appeal of idealism and humanism. It was not these, but the humble folk among the Muslims to whom the Guru's humanistic ethical appeal may be seen to have been addressed.

The personality of Guru Nanak has been venerated by Hindus as well as by Muslims, as is well known. To the Muslim his appeal, however, remained distant and broadly universal, as a holy man calling men to the higher values above the creeds. But such appeal, because of its being abstract and of no creed, could not be effective in winning for his teaching many adherents from among the Muslims. To the Hindu, his appeal because of the Indian tradition in which it was rooted was intimate and from the inside. It was the appeal of one who was furthering and revivifying this tradition in a particular way. Hence, it was that over wide areas beyond his native Punjab, his appeal was listened to, and he was venerated as Guru — spiritual guide, preceptor, or prophet. But at the same time, a contrary attitude of mind was visible right in his own time, as witnessed by even his earliest biographers. He drew the criticism of the orthodox for the very direction of his teaching wherein

it meant an ascent for the human spirit, his rejection of primitivism, fetishism and blind orthodoxy. The dynamic and idealizing force of his Word was not seen, but was viewed from a narrow, prejudiced angle. To some extent, both these attitudes have persisted up to this day. The Hindu mind has tended to view the teaching of Guru Nanak as somehow lying, if not outside, any way on the periphery of the tradition within which it finds itself. As this paper will show, such an impression is erroneous, and is based upon wrong criteria of judgement which, in this case, are external and superficial, and fail to grasp the true spirit of his teaching. In Guru Nanak's teaching was expressed the living, dynamic spirit of the highest idealism of the soul of India, as the discussion which follows will attempt to indicate.

Assertive and Recurrent Conservatism Combated

The quest for spiritual values in India, which have ranged from the primitive to the most enlightened that the human soul has visualized, shows at the same time a constant relapse into the darker primitive forms of belief amidst the enlightenment of philosophy and culture. The mythologies and dark, primitive creeds and sub-creeds by the hundred, have flourished and formed the faith of the people. Along with such primitivist gropings, there has gone on man's idealistic quest to find out and rest in the fundamental spiritual and ethical truths which should mean the evolution of his higher nature towards the goal of emancipation. This would mean man's release from the gross materialistic tendencies and urges towards the supreme goal called *moksha* or *mukti* (emancipation) or *nirvana* (the cessation of the gross psychological processes). In consequence of this age-old quest, there has developed in India the sublime conception called *dharma*, which is as much the fundamental *élan* of the universe towards its final goal of the triumph of truth and righteousness, as the urge in the human soul towards transcending what is gross and material and identifying itself in thought, word and deed with this *élan*. In India, this sublime conception has been the highest goal, the *summum bonum* of the spiritual-ethical quest of man, towards which the entire activity of his life is sought to be directed. This term *dharma* is comprehensive, and is, at its highest, the statement of a metaphysical ideal and scheme of life. Its comprehensiveness makes it difficult to render it adequately into another language.

What is noticeable about the evolution of religious thought in India is the persistence of much that is primitive and unregenerate with the higher and nobler aspects of the spiritual-ethical quest. By a strange process of assimilation, even among people whose thinking is otherwise enlightened and idealistic, there are vestiges of primitivist thinking in the form of superstitions and literal faith in ancient mythologies, the surviving faith in magic, fetish and a totally anthropomorphic view of

nature in the form of augury and propitiation — all forming an amalgam which not many have attempted to subject to a critical examination or to reduce to internal consistency. A total or near total reappraisal of belief and faith, except rarely, is not known in India. There has been development in the form of an ever-expanding scholasticism, analytical and axiomatic at the same time; but there has been no real progress in overthrowing the old lumber of beliefs by subjecting all life and thought to spiritual vision. Past stages of consciousness have continued to coexist with later thinking, in juxtaposition, without reappraisal of values. Each layer in such an amalgam may lie distinct, and guide belief and conduct, which may show fantastic contradictions. Not a synthesis, but only an amalgamation is achieved. Such contradictory levels of conduct, of course, are known to most human societies, but their existence in India is perhaps more overwhelming and striking in creating the confusion of values and criteria.

The true synthesizing process has rarely been in operation. For the most part, conservatism has only re-established old orthodoxies and has given to their content intellectualized or allegorized interpretations, but has resisted real progress or the evolution of creative ideals. Where new creeds have demanded a more fundamental adjustment, as in the case of Buddhism and Jainism in the pre-Christian era, the eclectic and synthesizing processes in them have been more active. The new creative ideals thrown up by these creeds, such as *ahimsa* and *nirvana* (the cessation of suffering through the annulment of transmigration) have been assimilated into the existing corpus of religious beliefs, and what may be called the process of true progression has thus been at work. But the fundamental matrix of religious thought, representing various heterogeneous levels, has again been assertive, so that a recurrent and powerful conservatism has at last swallowed up and assimilated into itself what began as movements fundamentally new. This is ultimately what happened to the two great creeds just mentioned, which rather took colouring from the older orthodoxy, with its numerous sects, with its set of deities, ritual, scholasticism and the general appurtenances of faith. Such has been the course of the evolution of religious thought and practice in India, which presents, as said earlier, a remarkable spectacle of the coexistence of numerous layers in the spiritual evolution of the people, without a distinct break and without what may properly be called a creative synthesis.

India presents perhaps the perfect form of a conservative society, and its beliefs have got firmly established, and despite cataclysmic changes of history have survived. Certain fundamentals have been accepted by most of the Indians, some even by those professing faiths coming from outside. These are, for example, caste divisions with religious implications and ideas of ritual purity and impurity; adherence to the distinct Indian forms of worship and ritual, such as bathing at certain sacred spots, faith in the

religious postulates of astrology. Then there are beliefs, aversions and taboos shared largely in common.

Guru Nanak's Teaching — A Liberating Force

An interesting question, as much religious as sociological in its bearing, is the precise kind of relationship in which Sikhism stands *vis-a-vis* Hinduism. There has been in the politico-religious history of the Sikh people a kind of assertion of distinct entity which, although it may not make them a separate nation (the idea of Indian nationhood cuts across such an assertion), does make them a distinct faith, and not merely a sect or form of the vast world of Hindudom. From another point of view, the Sikh faith bears such a close relationship with what is loosely called Hinduism that it is anyway a part of that grand confederation which idealistically constitutes Hindudom. Two considerations, each very relevant and significant to this issue, may be urged in this context. Sikhism has had a twofold effect on its parent stem—Hinduism. First, Sikhism has acted as a purifying agent within Hinduism and has thus been the guardian of its spiritual integrity. This is true much more emphatically, of course, of the north-western regions of India. It sought to purge Hinduism of its primitivism, its superstitious lumber and its heterogeneity. It proclaimed the falsity and meaninglessness of mere ritual, and attempted to end the divorce between faith and the moral life which had enervated Hinduism. Again, Sikhism acted as the defender of Hinduism. This it did much more on the spiritual plane than on the more obvious plane of infusing its followers with the spirit of militancy which brought them into inevitable conflict with the oppressors of the day who happened to be Muslims by faith. Of this, no doubt should be permitted to remain. It gave at least in the north-west of India the strength to Hindudom to save itself from what threatened to be its inevitable dissolution. Sikhism did this in a manner which makes a highly interesting sociological study. Those who fought in defence of what they had learnt to call *dharma*, which meant not only certain ethical values but also the Hindu way of life and its decencies, were the people drawn from what, according to the caste code of Hinduism, were reckoned among the unprivileged castes. The higher castes, despite the fact that Guru Nanak and all his successors came of one of these clans, being privileged people, stood generally aloof from the Sikh creed, which came with an egalitarian message socially and which looked, moreover, to be a force for upsetting established orthodoxy. The underprivileged classes, however, drank the word of Guru Nanak avidly, and acquired a new spiritual and moral life from it. It was these people, therefore, who stood on the periphery of Hindudom and were excluded from the higher aspects of its social or spiritual life, that became under the inspiration provided by the Gurus (guides, or apostles) of Sikhism its militant wing and its martyrs. Earlier, before taking up the sword pur-

suant to the call of Guru Gobind Singh, these very classes, low in the Hindu hierarchy, had listened to the spiritual-idealistic teaching of Guru Nanak and his successors, and had thereby been rendered immune to the appeal of Islam which offered both creedally and socially something superior to the dark primitivist creed and code of the phase and layer of Hinduism which alone they knew. Imbued with the new spiritual vision given by Guru Nanak, and thus enlightened and inspired with a new-found human dignity and idealism, they could withstand the tide of Islamic proselytization. They, thus, became the firm base of the Hindu pyramid which stood otherwise exposed to the menace of the rolling tide of Islam; and so saved Hinduism in the Punjab and the adjoining areas from virtual extinction. Later, when after more than half a century's sacrifices, the Sikhs had established themselves as the rulers of the Punjab, their power brought immense moral courage and strength to Hindudom all over north-western India, and put an end to the aggression which had been a feature of Muslim rule in these parts for centuries. This role which Sikhism played in the course of its history, though comparatively brief, was inherent in its very character from the beginning. Sikhism was, thus, able to be the defender of Hindudom, because whereas it was essentially of Hindu extraction, its outlook was so distinct from what had crystallized as Hinduism that it was not subject to those inherent weaknesses which had rendered the latter almost paralytic and unable to defend itself on the spiritual or social plane.

Sikhism vis-a-vis Islam

One further word before a statement is attempted regarding the fundamental teachings and metaphysical and ethical ideals underlying Sikhism. While providing moral and spiritual stamina, so to speak, to Hindudom, Sikhism at the same time did not preach hatred or bigotry against Islam or any other faith. It took its stand on the moral principles of tolerance and humanism. It equally called upon the Hindus and the Muslims to discover the best and noblest in the teaching of their respective faiths and to live according to them. This created an atmosphere in which the higher human and spiritual values could flourish. The armed conflict with Islam, which came later, was the result of certain historical accidents and was far from being inherent in the teachings of Guru Nanak, which inculcated the broadest spirit of tolerance, so that he was revered by the Muslims no less than by the Hindus. This delicate relationship between the teachings of Guru Nanak and those of Islam is something again, which would demand deep study, so that Sikhism without posing a hostile attitude towards Islam was yet the defender of Hindudom with which Islam was in inevitable conflict in India. Such a conflict was a reality, despite the evolution of a common social life with some give and take in various fields, social and cultural. The Guru's teaching of the

spirit of tolerance and humanity to the Hindus and the Muslims was essentially the exhortation to each to search for a common, universally acceptable meaning in the numerous forms of established religions.

Yet, to Hindudom in which he had himself been born, the Guru brought a distinctive message of self-purification and soul-searching, so that it should discover from its millennia-old history, a new life. This was the exhortation to Hindudom to shed off much of the dross and primitivism which was sticking on to it; to annul a great deal of its past, and so to find from the old roots a meaningful way of life. He thus sought, perhaps more than any other teacher or savant thrown up by Hindudom in recent centuries, to get Hindudom to make a distinct break with much of its past, and thus discover its soul, and a new life. Others did much less to disturb or displace what was a miscellaneous heritage from the past. This is one of the vital distinctions between the vision that Guru Nanak brought and the message of many others. Hence what Guru Nanak preached was in a much greater sense a new faith than had been the case with most other teachers within Hindudom. And yet, in a very vital sense, as has been hinted above, Guru Nanak and the faith which emerged from his vision are integrally related to the great spiritual ethical movement of Hinduism. It may be put thus: *His vision was no less an assertion of the spiritual idealism of India than was that of any other Indian teacher. Its sources and founts were Indian, and it sought to fulfil and realize the goals which were inherent in the spiritual urges of India.*

The Enunciation of the New Creed by Guru Nanak — Imperfectly Understood — Orthodoxy Repudiated

It is from this point that one may conveniently take up the statement of the fundamentals of the metaphysical and philosophical thought which Guru Nanak gave to the people. That statement fitted into the scheme of a creed, and purged it of those dark and primitivist elements which had been considered for thousands of years almost alone to be true religion. As to why orthodoxy did not give wide assent to Guru Nanak's message and failed to see the deep implications of his role as the saviour of the basic values and decencies of Hinduism was this very evaluative character of his teaching. In viewing Guru Nanak's religion closely, one is struck with the vast amount of pruning which he did, so that after that pruning only the essence, the ideal, the spirit remains. This is given by him a fresh orientation, so that it acquires a rich humanist colouring and rests on values in which the universal aspects of the spiritual experience, compassion and idealistically motivated action remain as the principal constituents. On considering the exclusions or the excisions made by him, it may be seen that a great part of the lumber of the past, i.e., the dark beliefs, would go by the board. Such a comprehensive process of exclusion is not to be seen in the teaching of any other faith, which has in

comparatively recent times developed in India from the main tradition round which has been organized the religious experience of the people from age to age. As said earlier, it is the usual spectacle in India to find much from the past surviving in a kind of unresolved or unassimilated juxtaposition with any fresh religious ideas which may have evolved, so that a reformer would at the same time be a continuator of what in fairness to his logical position he must rethink and reject. Thus with sects and sub-sects, each having a distinct point of departure in its beliefs and ritual from the rest, there is a vast ground common to them all, so that the various faiths and sects are based upon subtle and narrow distinctions and not upon broad, creative ideas or freshly thought-out philosophies. Thus it is that a kind of assimilative attitude towards religion has got confirmed, making for the acceptance of vast masses of heterogeneous and unreconciled and unsynthesized beliefs coexisting in the faith of the various sects formed.

Guru Nanak began, as told in the early accounts of his life, in episodes, not realistic according to modern criteria but symbolically true, by rejecting much in established orthodoxy, which had been looked upon as the essence of *dharma* (faith). Thus the ritual, called, in common parlance, *Karma*, comprising ceremonials such as wearing the sacred thread, bathing at spots held traditionally sacred, observing ritual purity in food and touch, the general practice of untouchability, of apportioning merit in the social scale as well as in terms of personal sanctity by caste determined by birth, the paste-mark, rosary and forms of wear considered sacred, the worship of the stone called *Shaligram*, believed to be the incarnation of Vishnu, and such other — was rejected. Furthermore, as told of him, he also rejected much other ceremonial, such as the observance of certain dates annually in memory of the dead and charity associated with this in the belief that it benefited the departed spirits. He rejected also the elaborate ceremonial and charities ritually prescribed for obsequies. The idea of impurity associated with childbirth, as also with womankind in general, he denounced. He refused to adopt for himself, while engaged in his journeys to spread his message far and wide, any particular mode of holy man's garb, which might proclaim him of this or that sect. As told of him, his wear was an assortment of features, Hindu and Muslim, so that quite often he was mistaken for a Muslim holy man. Also with regard to the ritual of the various monastic orders, such as *Yogi*, *Sanyasi*, *Bairagi*, *Saraogi*, *Jangam* and others, his views were equally positive. Outer form he considered to be non-essential; something irrelevant to spiritual experience and ethical conduct, which alone he considered to be true religion. As to forms adopted and sanctioned by Islam, he was no less emphatic that without the spirit, the essence, these were meaningless and a snare for the soul; and hence must be transcended. His critique of Muslim forms, however, is sporadic and less emphatic than of the various forms which were sanctioned within Hinduism, due no doubt to the fact

of his examining the latter from within — as by one who felt called upon to set in order the society in which he himself was born. Criticism of various forms of ritual may be met with in the recorded Word of Guru Nanak in the *Guru Granth* as well as in the traditions narrated of him. While in compositions, such as the *Var Asa*, such criticism is sharp and concentrated as though an assault is mounted on established and entrenched orthodoxy, in almost all places along with matter mystical, spiritual and ethical one comes upon criticism of ritual and orthodoxy and a warning against accepting these as being identical with religion. It is everywhere shown to be a mere form, a snare for the soul, which must rather transcend forms to become one with the Universal Soul than rest in the shows of things, philosophically called *Maya* (illusion, phenomenon).

In the eyes of the masses, steeped in the practice of ritual and orthodoxy, such rejection of their forms would be great impiety indeed, and the priests particularly, as recorded in the tradition, expressed themselves with strong disapproval of the trend of the Guru's teaching, which to them was a negation of all accepted ideas of piety and orthodoxy. The Yogis and other anchorites of various orders were similarly critical of him, in the first place, for preaching without belonging to an anchorite order; and second, for commending the way of spirituality without its mythology and form—the latter, in the medieval times, being called *Hatha* or the *Yoga*—path of forcible effort, through elaborate ritual and psycho-physical exercises. On the plane of thought and mystical emotion, the public mind had been familiar with the criticism of form, ritual and orthodoxy, by the devotees of various persuasions, Hindu as well as Muslim. But by a process only of partial assimilation of intellectual thinking, the people, whereas they participated on the emotional plane in the criticism of orthodoxy, stuck on to its forms in daily practice at the same time. The contradiction or anomaly did not trouble the average person's mind, as it does not trouble him in thousands of concerns of his daily conduct, showing a clear hiatus between his intellectual and ideal formulations on the one hand and his habitual mode of organizing practical conduct on the other. The various monastic and mystical orders, the devotees — *bhaktas* and *dervishes* — to give them their generic Hindu and Muslim labels—all shared in such contradiction and anomaly. They generated in themselves and in the masses passions which were, in essence, mystical and, hence, by implication out of step with the rigidities of code and orthodoxy. Yet, in actual practice, they furthered the beliefs, prejudices and practices of orthodoxy. Hence their mystical and emotional stance, while on occasion it bathed the soul in an elevated passion, and even left behind certain intellectual formulations like the conviction of harmony of all existence and the consequential attitudes of the brotherhood of man and the supremacy of the compassionate attitude — all such experiences and formulations were only momentary tremors of the soul, fitted within

the framework of orthodoxy, Hindu no less than Muslim, as the case might be. The general life of belief and conduct was left undisturbed.

Such a partial approach to the life of religion, or such an anomalous conduct is not to be found in the teaching of Guru Nanak, which shows a consistency of belief and thought born of deep meditation and absorption in the Absolute, so that all contradiction between the intellectual and emotional planes and action is sought to be resolved. What Guru Nanak imparts through his teaching is not an emotion, as would be the case with those engaged in arousing mystical frenzy, nor does he give only metaphysics or a scholastic philosophy to satisfy the intellect, but a *prophecy*, an entire scheme of the conduct of life in which belief, thought and action are in harmony; and thought or emotion nowise contradict conduct. The emphasis on conduct as the final fruit of the religious life is everywhere to be met with in Guru Nanak's teaching. Equally strong is the emphasis in it on purifying thought and belief to such an extent that no vestige of superstition or illusion may be left to deflect conduct from the true path of righteous living into various forms of error, which to the wrongly instructed mind fail to appear as such. This approach, in its nature revolutionary, obviously called into question the very basis, the very foundation of what orthodoxy held to be the essence of faith. Hence to make again a point which needs to be emphasized is that what Guru Nanak was teaching was practically a new religion, and not merely a re-formulation of accepted and established orthodoxy, as was the case with the sects and sub-sects with which the world of Hindudom was littered.

Challenge to Fundamentals of Established Orthodoxy

The criticism and denunciation of ritual and form which were choking the spirit of religion might, in part, be met with in the pronouncements of other teachers as well, though in their case the remarks were casual and not as the result of an integrated scheme of spiritual-ethical life as in the case of Guru Nanak. The Guru opposed the established orthodoxy by challenging many of its fundamentals. His denunciation of caste, which had been held almost to be synonymous with religion and of other ancillary aspects of the practice of religion, each believed to exist by divine sanction, places him in a position apart from teachers and reformers working more in conformity with the established beliefs. This by itself would have earned for him the fierce opposition of the orthodox. But his challenge went much farther and deeper, as said above, than mere form and ritual and such morally objectionable conduct as hypocrisy. He examined the foundations of much on which belief and religious faith rested. This latter challenge, the nature of which will shortly be examined, places him almost outside the pale of established Hinduism, and has during the period of a little less than five centuries since his ministry began, given to his teaching the character almost of a separate religion

different from Hinduism, as traditionally practised. For the religion preached by him, Guru Nanak, however, drew upon an idealism which itself was inherent in the higher aspects of what is called Hinduism, but which in the long history of Hinduism had been overlaid with much primitivism and had become only a matter for the rare insight of the mystic or the saint. Guru Nanak removed the dark primitivism and enunciated the ideal, the highest vision attained by the soul of India. He no less firmly rejected the over-elaborate scholastic postulates, with their basis only in the desire to ramify endlessly, the concepts and assumptions which had no ethical or spiritual reality, and which had themselves become a mystique, a mythology, greatly puzzling to the common man, and which provided only that monopoly of the knowledge of religion to a priestcraft established by caste which had led to manifold abuses. These abuses are well known in India, the main being the divorce of religion from the conduct of life and the assumption of substitutes for the spiritual and moral life in the form of superstitions and much propitiatory ceremonial, linked to a great deal of primitivism.

The evaluative and purificatory teaching of Guru Nanak was a unique phenomenon in the history of religious thought in India, inasmuch as the ideal concepts to which he gave exclusive expression and emphasis had not before been isolated from the mass of primitivist thinking and scholasticism, but were entertained by the sages and savants only in rare moments of exaltation in the context of much that contradicted them. This exclusive emphasis laid by Guru Nanak on the conception of the Creator and the path of spiritual ascent, whereas a great achievement of the soul of man, became itself the cause of a kind of isolation of Guru Nanak and his teaching, which situation still continues. Other denominations which make something like an approach to the teaching of Guru Nanak in this respect have broken away from orthodoxy only partially, and hence continue to be considered much more emphatically within the pale of Hindudom. To the emphasis of Guru Nanak's teaching, which makes for the isolation of his creed, have been added recent political tensions and prejudices, so that the breaking away of Sikhism from the mainstream of Hindudom sometimes appears to be imminent—a situation highly unfortunate and historically false.

Besides caste and ritual, which are mere externals, certain elements of faith are essential and integral elements of Hinduism. These elements are centred on mythology, which has been growing, accumulating and developing intricate and complex relationships and spiritual and moral overtones, over the millennia. To the earlier mythology of the non-Aryan peoples with whom the Aryans came into contact, albeit as conquerors, within the Aryan tradition so amalgamated, there developed further ramifications in later times, and found something like a culmination in the great epics of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which created new mythologies and related these to the pre-existing strains. After the period of the

epics, it appears that a more realistic interpretation of personality came into vogue, and the process of deification and apotheosis from which had grown the older mythologies was found untenable in ages grown critical. But the older mythologies continued to flourish, and they remain the very basis and idiom of the entire religious thinking of the people. Here and there, even in later periods, heroes and saints were deified, but there was at the same time a conviction of their humanity. This was a distinct note from the wholesale deification of legendary heroes and sages of the earlier ages.

The process of deification and mythologizing was later placed on a metaphysical basis, so to say, by the incarnation theory which has reigned supreme in the post-Vedic thinking and belief of the Indian people. According to this theory, Vishnu, the Preserver aspect of the Hindu Trinity, assumes in different periods some form — human or other — for the fulfilment of specific divine purposes. The acceptance of this principle sanctions and makes obligatory the worship of various deities, thus admitted to the Pantheon. Such worship would, by the inclination of the human mind, be fixed on the concrete, the visible, and lead to the propitiation of various gods and goddesses. There were numerous deities, generally the embodiments of the forces of nature, whose worship was at the basis of the Vedic religious tradition. But later, to these Vedic deities were added others, particularly the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and the incarnations of Vishnu. To this list would be added further formulations of the divine, such as the consorts of Vishnu and Shiva — Lakshmi and Durga — each known to be in several manifestations with different names, and personages allied to the incarnations. The Vedic deities were all this while not superseded, but continued to be propitiated in various rituals. Heavenly bodies, rivers, mountains and other features — all acquired the divine status. So did animals like the cow, the monkey and even the snake. To all these were added various other local deities, some beneficent, others maleficent and to be feared. This spectacle of numerous deities, thought traditionally in India to run into millions, would be well known to the students of Indian religious history. From belief in incarnations and deities, it necessarily follows that their representations in visible form — images, idols — should be made and worshipped. This, of course, is too obvious to need any elaboration.

Guru Nanak's Conception of the Supreme Being

The sages and savants of India, the great *rishis*, who meditated on the philosophy contained in the Upanishads, were led by their spiritual insights into a firm conception of the Supreme Creator, above all deities and in His character, eternal and immutable. To this, they gave the names *Om* and *Purusha*, handed down from the Veda. They also evolved the

concept of Brahma or Brahman, the Absolute without attributes and hence without any limitation whatever. *Om* was lengthened by the Upanishads to *Omkar*, interpreted as the modified conception of Brahma, with attributes; since the attributeless Brahman is beyond human conception, man can form some idea of Him only through realizing His attributes. Other terms for the Supreme Being met with in the Upanishads are *Kartar* (Creator), *Niranjan* (immaculate) *Samyam* (not knowing differences).¹ He is also called *Parinav* (ever new, immutable). Among His attributes are *Amrita* (immortal, eternal), *Antaryami* (Inner Controller); *Akshar* (immutable); *Dhīro na Sochyate* (He is beyond grief). *Purusha* is supreme over all, and the ruler of the past and the present. This Supreme Reality is also called *Atma* (Self) into which the awakened individual self may merge. Such merging (later called *mukti*) does not come to those who constantly think there is only this world and none hereafter. The knowledge of the Self (Brahman, *Purusha*, *Om*) cannot be acquired through the intellect, or study or learning; though hidden in all things It can be seen only by those who are "of subtle insight" (*sukhsamdarshyah*). Ultimately, confessing the helplessness of the human mind to grasp the illimitable and ineffable reality of *Om*, the Upanishads cry out, *Neti, Neti* (Not this, not this), since no simile, metaphor, symbol or any other resource available to human language can render Him adequately.

While the seers of the Upanishads were evolving this sublime vision of the Supreme Being—the Absolute—the former beliefs in deities had not been superseded. In the Upanishads themselves, there is open or implied belief in the existence of deities of Vedic conception, so that the position or faith attained is that which has been called Henotheism—belief in the existence of the Supreme Being side by side with the belief in parallel deities. This attitude of mind has continued in varying degrees of faith corresponding to the levels of realization in the Indian mind, in general. Whereas the average person has propitiated some gods or goddesses (since quite often faith in more than one is held by a family, clan or tribe) there has, at the same time, been a vague conception of the Supreme Being, known by various names of later invention, such as Ishvara, Parmeshvara, Parmatma, Prabhu, Govind. Names of personages drawn from later mythologies, such as Shiva, Shankar, Shambhu, Rama and Hari (this last stands particularly for Krishna, for whom numerous periphrastic expressions are current) and others have been employed rather to express the idea of the Supreme Being than particular deities. A term like *Bhagvan* (Lord of Prosperity) stands on a somewhat ambiguous ground, as indicative occasionally of the Supreme Being, but more often of the great incarnation, Krishna. This situation obtains in India still. The average person has a vague awareness of the evolution of the idea of the divine from the deity stage to that of the Supreme Being.

Here, we have the most significant point of departure in the teaching

of Guru Nanak from the pre-existing situation in religious thinking. In Guru Nanak's teaching there appears to be present the acceptance of the broad aspects of the cosmology, as handed down, in Indian tradition. The division of the universal time into the four *yugas* or ages, with the accepted characteristics of each, is met with in him. For example, in *Var Asa*, on page 470 of the *Guru Granth*, there occur the following lines in a stanza:

In *Sati-Yuga*,² the chariot was of contentment, with Righteousness as the Charioteer;
 In *Treta*³ came the chariot of continence, with Might⁴ as the charioteer;
 In *Dwapur*⁵ was the chariot of austerity, with Charity as the charioteer;
 In *Kali-Yuga*⁶ descended the chariot of fire,⁷ with Evil⁸ as the charioteer.

Giving in a vision the process of Creation, Guru Nanak says in terms familiar to the Indian mind on this subject:

For countless aeons was there utter darkness;
 Neither was then the earth nor the heavens;
 God's eternal ordinance alone did then operate.
 Neither were then day and night, nor sun or moon;
 The Creator rested, withdrawn into the void.⁹
 As was His will, He created the universe,
 And spread it over without any contrivance;
 Then created He Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha,¹⁰
 As also the illusion¹¹ to lead the mind astray.

(*Guru Granth*, pp. 1036-37)

Earlier, under the same measure, *Maru*, the Guru thus expresses the theme of Creation:

Many were the ages passed in utter darkness,
 In which the illimitable Creator was in a trance;
 Alone, apart He sat enveloped in the darkness;
 This darkness had not then spread.
 Thus did He pass thirty-six Ages,
 In which the universe ran as He willed.
 None His co-equal; alone, alone was the illimitable One.
 In the four Ages has He remained hidden from sight,
 Provoking the urge in the soul to know Him;
 He lodges in the soul, and pervades all existence.
 In all ages, He pervades —
 This knowledge is given to the rare enlightened souls.

(*Guru Granth*, p. 1026)

In the above extract is not only a restatement of the process of creation, as known to the Indian tradition, but there also occurs the conception of the Supreme Creator, who is above the temporal process. This exclusive emphasis on this aspect of the Godhead is of paramount significance in

Guru Nanak's teaching, and will be taken up for consideration in some detail below.

Advaita or Monism — Mythology

Mythological and philosophical concepts, as these have been developed in India through the ages, mostly occur in Guru Nanak's teaching, with a twofold significance. In some contexts, there is an unmistakable evidence of acceptance of mythology; only the mythological personages, the various deities, are not looked upon as worthy of man's worship which must go to the Absolute alone — Oankar,¹² Brahma or Karta-Purakh.¹³ In a disquisitionary-devotional composition, entitled *Oankar*,¹⁴ recorded in the *Guru Granth* from pages 929 to 938, there is a statement regarding the creation of the Cosmos, including Brahma, the first god in the Hindu Trinity, by Oankar (*Om*, *Omkar* — the Eternal Principle). Brahma, created by Oankar, enunciated the Vedas, the primal scriptures, through the enlightenment derived from Oankar. Oankar is the creator and comprehends and transcends all creation. This composition is a comprehensive expression of mythology, faith in the Absolute and the great doctrine of Advaita or monism which is implicit in the highest Indian spiritual-philosophical thought and is woven into Guru Nanak's teaching as also into that of his successors. The opening lines of this great poem are:

By Oankar was created Brahma, who meditated on Oankar.
 From Oankar arose the mountains and the Ages.
 By contemplating the sacred Oankar is mankind saved;
 By the holy power of Oankar are the devotees of God emancipated.
 Listen ye to the exposition of the syllable Onum;¹⁵
 This syllable Onum is the essence of the three worlds.
 Listen Thou Brahman! What rigmarole thou art writing!
 Write, by divine inspiration, the Eternal Name of God, who is Rama¹⁶
 and Gopal.¹⁷

Concepts drawn from mythology and philosophy, such as that of *Maya* (the illusion which leads man to see the material universe apart from the Creator, and thus breeds egoism and materialism); the universe as the result of the union between *Shiva* (the Eternal Principle) and *Shakti* (the mutable matter); the great theory of *Karma* (the inevitable continuing influence of actions, determining the mind, its tendencies and destiny), of transmigration and the escape from it (*mukti* or release) — all find repeated and earnest expression in the Guru's vision and teaching. So also is almost ubiquitous the idea of the 'three qualities' of *tamas* (sloth, dark animal tendencies), *rajas* (sheer energy for action without guidance by thought) and *sattava* (intellect, without spiritual awakening); the state of *turiya* which is the transcendence of those and is true absorption in the

Supreme Soul, the Eternal. There is then the Indian conception of the 'five' evil tendencies, leading the mind towards sin. In the *Japji*, there is mention of the Bull, imagined in mythology to support the earth on his horns. The text is: 'The Bull of righteousness is born of compassion.' As one considers the context, in many places mythological concepts, such as that of the Bull, are treated by the Guru symbolically, as vehicles for spiritual and ethical ideas.

This last kind of the use of mythology, that is, the symbolical, is, as a matter of fact, what is of the greatest significance in Guru Nanak's teaching. Gods and goddesses he considered, if he believed them to have existed, as inferior deities, not worthy of man's homage, who must worship, alone the Supreme Being. Concepts like *Nad* (the primal creative note of the universe) and *Veda* (the primal, revealed knowledge of God) established in mystical literature, he reinterpreted as nothing other than Divine might and mystery. There are no gods and goddesses, but the Supreme Being, the Eternal alone. In the *Japji* it is said:

From God is the *Nad* and the *Veda*; He pervades the entire universe.
God is Shiva, Gorakh¹⁸ and Brahma, and Parbatī¹⁹ the Universal Mother.
This truth is hard to realize, and harder still to relate.
My master hath given me this illumination;
He alone is the provider of all creation;
Him may never put out of mind. (Stanza 5)

The use of mythology for illustrative and allegorical purposes is frequent in the Guru's Word. Mythological beings conceived as representatives of good and evil figure quite often in his composition. At about a dozen places in the *Guru Granth* is God called *Asur-Sanghar* (the Destroyer of Demons). This is an entirely new note in the religious thinking of India over a long period, when the idea of Divine Justice had been forgotten or lost in the mythological haze by a people rendered introvert and incapable of grappling with the large problems of social relationships. In medieval India, God is adopted as the object of fervent love and adoration or as a mystic abstraction to be approached through elaborate rituals of yoga and tantra, apart from the Being to propitiate for worldly objectives—such were the reigning conceptions of God. Guru Nanak, with his heightened sensitiveness to the presence of evil in the world and the inhumanity which cried for an avenger, saw God also as the stern, eternal principle of justice, who must destroy evil, even though evil for brief periods might strut about in triumph. Thus taking a figure from mythology and epic, he figured for the might of Divine Justice, as the destroyer of demons, after the myths and legends of antiquity. Figures from myth and epic were fixed in his mind illustrative of various principles. Aggression and oppression must meet with dire retribution. In *Oankar*, already referred to, the Guru says:

Those who abjured forgiveness, despite their vast
 cohorts were effaced from the earth;
 Countless their number, hard to enumerate.
 True joy comes from forgiveness and truthful living.
 Egoism shall be destroyed and shall destroy its possessor, —
 Its seed must sprout into useless weeds.

(*Guru Granth*, p. 937)

The above is a vision of the inevitable march of the universe towards a just fulfilment, in general abstract terms. Below are given two passages in which this theme is allegorically treated, with symbolic figures drawn from mythology. These symbols would be well known to persons with some familiarity with the history of religious thought in India:

Duryodhana was ruined in dishonour;
 He forgot God, the Creator;
 He who persecutes God's saints
 Must come to harm and suffering.

(*Guru Granth*, p. 225)

Earlier in this hymn, mention in similar terms has been made of other evil-doers and tyrants figuring in mythology—Ravana, Harnaksha²⁰ and Jarasandha. In another hymn, the same theme is stated:

The beloved Lord created Krishna in the form of the child-hero and
 gave him the strength to drag by the hair the tyrants Kamsa and
 Chandur;
 He is the true Might, destroyer of the power of intoxicated brutes.
 The Lord who made the universe has kept all its affairs in His own
 power;
 The Universe is on His leash; He drags it whithersoever He pleases;
 The proud tyrant shall inevitably be destroyed; while the saint
 meditating on Him shall be merged in Him.

(*Guru Granth*, p. 606)

In the compositions of the successors of Guru Nanak, a similar use of mythology is found to have been made, particularly when issues of good and evil are to be forcefully illustrated. This use may not rule out a belief in these mythologies as embodying literal fact or history. What is to be noted is that mythological figures, from the gods and goddesses, even those as high as Rama and Krishna, are not held up as sharers in the supremacy of the Eternal, the Creator. In a famous passage of the composition of Guru Arjan Dev, fifth in Guru Nanak's line, Divine protection in a bold metaphor is called 'Rama's arc' (Rama-Kar), drawn by Rama to confer immunity from evil influence on Sita as long as she did not overstep it. As a matter of fact, in the entire Sikh tradition of sacred literature, the use of Indian philosophy, metaphysics, mythology

and epic is so widespread and so commonly employed in all religious contexts that to attempt to illustrate it would only be superfluous.

Idealization of Concepts—Hindu and Muslim

A number of mythological names of deities have, as in common every-day speech, been employed by Guru Nanak and his successors also to designate the Supreme Being. Their original mythological meaning has, in most cases, been obscured by their imprecise use in common speech for what the ordinary person conceives, however dimly to be the Reality above the gods and goddesses. Rama and Hari, two of the commonest god-names, have been made by the Guru to express the Supreme Being. So is also, though sparingly, Krishna (vide pp. 469 and 413 of the *Guru Granth*). Numerous periphrastic and attributive names of Krishna and Vishnu, especially, have been employed in this sense. The context in each case, however, makes it perfectly clear that no deities, according to some mythology or theology, but the Supreme Being, the Creator, is meant; and these names are only popular, shorthand expressions with the advantage of familiarity. Thus to take a few examples, these names are found to have been used. First, these indicate Krishna: Damodar, Madhusudan, Gopal, Banwari, Mohan, Murari. Then, are those expressive of Vishnu: Gorakh, Srirang, Sridhar, Narayana, Sarang-Pani, Jagannath.²¹ Direct formulations expressive of the Absolute Eternal are again there: *Par-Brahm*, *Niranjan*,²² *Akal-Purakh* (*Purusha*), *Parmeshvar*, *Karta*, *Nirankar* (the Formless), *Sati-Nam* (*Satya-Nama*) and a number of periphrastic names.

It may be mentioned here that names descriptive of God, redolent of Muslim associations, have also been used, by Guru Nanak. The use of such words has significance mainly in the context of the Guru's general humanist vision, of which tolerance formed an important aspect. The Guru's endeavour was to bring the Hindus and the Muslims together (as also the various warring sects within each faith) through the recognition of the universal human truths in the idea of God; in the higher universal spiritual truths, and in morality and noble endeavour. This is evidenced as much by the exhortation to the Hindu Yogi (and every class of anchorites) and the Muslim to seek behind the forms of his faith for the deeper truths of the soul and noble conduct. Thus the sacred thread, bathing-spots, paste-mark, etc., of the Hindus, the earrings, ash-smearing and other symbols of the Yogis and the *namaz*, the circumcision and the Ramadan fasting of the Muslim are all declared without the spiritual and moral life behind them to be mere shows, a sham. The exhortation is to cultivate through them (rather than by regarding them) the spiritual-moral life. The terms drawn from the beliefs and practice of Islam and its mysticism called Sufism had by Guru Nanak's time become fairly well known among the common folk. Hence the Guru used such terms

in a grand endeavour to touch the heart and soul of the Muslim no less than those of the Hindu. Thus words like *Allah*, *Khuda*, *Sahib*, (Lord-Master), *Pak-Parvardgar* (The Holy Provider), *Kadir* (Almighty), *Karim* (Bountiful), *Rahim* (Merciful), *Sultan* (King) are used for the Creator. Attributes and words expressive of spiritual states and allied context: *nadar*, *karam*, *bakhshish*, *darbar*, *nishan*, *rah*, *dargah*, *dar*, *divan* (*diban*), *kurban*, *mehar*, *riza*, *darvesh*, *mahal*, *talab*, *gharib*, *misikin*, *didar*, *kudrat*, *shair*, *saza*, *reza*, *hukam*, *ferman*, *zor*, and numerous others. Sometimes, these words are used in combination with words of Indian origin, as in the phrase *Karta Kadir Karim²² Bed (Veda) Kateb* (the *Koran*); *Jam (Yama) jagati*, *ratan*, *jawahar*, *manak* and others. Freely as these words of Muslim origin are used by the Guru, the cardinal and key-terms for the expression of the spiritual vision and the path of enlightenment are of Indian origin, clearly implying that the core of the messages which the Guru brought to mankind is Indian in its deeper character and significance. Of course, he widened the spiritual appeal of this message to embrace in his wide love and compassion the Muslims as much as the Hindus. But the call to the Muslims distinctly is to search for the universal values in *their* creed, without going very far into its details. The creed of the Hindus, on the other hand, because the Guru belongs from the inside to this tradition, is subjected to detailed critique; its mythology in a way is adopted both as a fact and basis for allegory, and the path of spiritual ascent is defined and chalked out in its terms. This brings us back to the thesis that the Guru was presenting a vision which was essentially Indian, though a powerful eclectic and evaluative process had been at work in rejecting a great deal of what he felt was matter irrelevant to the spiritual path and was only an accretion sticking on from a past which was derelict. From the above discussion, the synthesizing and creative tendency of Guru Nanak's teaching would have been made amply clear. Fixing his adoration and worship on the Supreme Being, the Eternal Being, for whom he used the names already evolved in the course of the spiritual history of India, he rejected polytheism outright, and along with it as necessary corollaries, the incarnation theory and image-worship. His position touches pure monotheism in one aspect, though as explained in the course of this article, he adopts mythological concepts to his faith. While, however, accepting mythology he considers its religious stances outmoded and superseded and even sinful, as deviations from the worship of the Eternal—the Timeless—and hence rejects beliefs which proceed from immature thinking or ignorance. His absorption in the Eternal makes him reject the lure of the temporal as something without meaning, and also as sinful.

As a matter of fact, transcending forms and creeds, his vision rests in monism—the conception of the unreality of phenomena and the existence of God alone as Reality. On this concept, some discussion will follow a little later. To the vast mass of people in India—both the general public

and priests and scholars—who believe in mythology and practise polytheism side by side with some kind of awareness of the Eternal, Guru Nanak's position, although resting in the highest and purest spiritual vision, would sound heterodox. In his own day, orthodoxy was critical of him, and since then the general attitude of Hindudom towards him has been characterized by a failure to understand. As hinted earlier, it would be a capital subject of study for sociology to investigate the grounds of the comparative indifference of Hindudom towards Guru Nanak, despite his expressing the purest essence of its spirituality, and saving it from virtual extinction where it was greatly exposed. The causes are numerous and deep, and need careful study, as the issues are delicate and may perhaps provoke sharp controversies. But the phenomenon is, nonetheless, such as to call for study at the academic level, if not on the public forum. One answer has earlier been suggested that Hinduism has lived on the level of unshakable faith in caste, incarnation, polytheism, as also on a certain hang-over from its primitive past. Then, there has been the elaborate, hair-splitting scholasticism of the long ages of philosophy in which a kind of stasis was arrived at, and religion becoming an amalgam of the primitive and scholastic, was almost completely dissociated from spiritual and moral life. Perhaps there has been a reluctance on the part of the thinking Hindu mind to shake itself free of such influences of the past; and rather than the evolution or synthesis, the process in India has been a juxtaposition and an amalgamation of all of the past with such new concepts as have appeared from time to time. This was not countenanced by Guru Nanak, who cut off much of what was in the traditional past, and formulated a consistent, enlightened creed, oriented towards the higher spiritual experience and a comprehensive morality.

The Creed Elucidated—Quintessence of Indian Spirituality

It is time now to consider certain aspects of Guru Nanak's creed, as it emerges from the outpourings of his soul, in the *Bani* or Word of his composition. While, as said earlier, the Guru has used words and phrases drawn from various sources to express his experience of God, the cardinal terms in which he has defined his creed are those contained in the *Mul Mantra* or the basic formula or creed, which appears at the head of the prayer-chant, the *Japji*, and is repeated either in full or in a condensed form wherever a fresh chapter or canto begins in the Holy Book. It is used also on all occasions for invoking Divine grace and blessing. This creed, as is well known, runs as *Ek-Oankar, Sati-Nam, Karta-Purakh, Nir-Bhau, Nir Vair, Akal Murati, Ajuni, Sai-Bhang, Guru Prasadi*. Rendered into English, it would be: "The one indivisible Supreme Being; Truth Eternal; Creator-Purusha; without fear; without rancour; Timeless Form; unincarnated; self-existent; realized through

His own grace." In this creed, the term *Oankar* to which the Guru added the numeral 1 (*Ek* here) for indubitable emphasis on the indivisible character of the Supreme Being, whose power and eternity no deity may share or approach, was evolved in the Upanishads, as said earlier and goes back to the Vedas as *Om*. No name is holier than this, and its praise is illimitable, as is evident from the *Oankar*, a rendering of a passage from which has been quoted above. *Nam* in the second phrase comes from the mystical tradition of yoga, recognized by the Guru as the way of spiritual enlightenment which, however, he called upon its practitioners to divest it of its ritual and the fatuous search for power through arousing the suppositions, *Kundalini* and other elaborate physical practices. *Nam* stands for the total spiritual endeavour, for the truth, like *Shabad* (*shabda*), which literally means word, but has a deep, esoteric meaning as the Eternal Truth. *Karta* (*Kartar*) and *Purakh* (*Purusha*) again have spiritual Upanishadic associations, and have through the millennia acquired deep significance expressive of the Supreme Being, as against the deities of polytheistic conception. *Nir-Bhau* (without fear) and *Nir-Vair* (without rancour) are self-explanatory. *Nir-Bhau* (*Nir-bhayam*) occurs as an attribute of Brahma in the *Mandukya Upanishad*, whereas *Nir-Vair* is particularly significant of the universality of the Divine grace and compassion. *Akal* in the next phrase, literally, timeless (immortal, eternal) has become a key-term in Sikh spiritual thought. Here again, the significant emphasis is on the eternity of the Creator. *Ajuni* (unborn, uncreated) only further emphasizes God's eternity, and places Him apart from the gods and goddesses of common belief. Stanza 3 in the *Japji*, as the opening verses in *Var Asa* and other compositions develop the theme—God's eternity and His uncreated character. *Sai-Bhang*, an altered form of the Upanishadic *Swayam-bhu* (self-existent) lays still further stress on the eternity of God. Derived from Indian spiritual sources, it is remarkably parallel with the Muslim attributive phrase *Kaim-bizzat* (existent by His own self, i.e., by His own might). Who will say if in adopting the concept *Sai-Bhang* the Guru had also the Muslim phrase in mind and the desire to make the Hindus and the Muslims see that the God of all mankind could be defined in identical terms, irrespective of the barriers of language. All this must remain a mystery. The last phrase *Guru-Prasadi* not only places the key-word 'Guru' as the equivalent of the Supreme Being, but also brings in the term *Prasad* (grace) hallowed by antiquity. This term itself and its Muslim Sufi equivalents, *nadar* (*nazar*, the glance of grace) and *mehar* (kindness, love) are some of the most frequently employed terms in the Guru's holy text.

As may be evident, the basic creed is in terms of Indian spirituality and sacred traditions, ancient and those which in the Guru's time were more recent. In this creed, the Guru gave to the Hindu a conception of faith and of God which was sublime; and in which after so many accretions had been lopped off, the essence, the highest enlightenment,

remained. This the Guru wished to give to Indian humanity, calling it away from darkness and superstition.

The creed is by itself the expression of pure monotheism. In the total context of the Guru's teaching, however, this monotheism is qualified in two directions. In the first place, as stated earlier, it is difficult to postulate monotheism in the Guru's teaching of the type as, for example, found in Islam. The background of history as in the Quran is of the Jewish people, who since Abraham's time were monotheists in an uncompromising manner.³⁴ The background of history or mythology (for in the earlier phases the two would be identical) in India, was clearly one in which various deities or hero-gods had claimed worship and had stood for metaphysical concepts. The Guru rejected the idea of these deities, etc., being treated as objects of worship, or being regarded as Divine incarnations. But he does not appear to have denied that they had existed as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and the goddesses Lakshmi and Parvati. The characters of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* also he accepts as having existed. Since all these personages were in a sense sacred, the Guru may be said to accept them as the objects of veneration and by no means as false or non-existent. Sita, the ideal of sublime purity and nobility in womanhood, he holds up for veneration in the *Japji* (stanza 37). The Guru's attitude towards the quasi-divine personages of mythology appears to be one of acceptance as illustrative of great moral qualities but, of course, not as co-sharers of sanctity with God.

While thus the Guru's attitude is not parallel with Abrahamic or Islamic monotheism, it inclines mystically towards monism. Monism in Indian spiritual history is designated by the well-known metaphysical term *advaita*, which literally means non-duality. The implication of this negative phrase is that the only real existence is that of the Absolute, the Brahma (or Brahman) and that the appearance of diversity is only an illusion born of the limited vision of man's ego, temporarily separated from the Universal Soul (*Parmaatma, Brahma*) into individual existence. To overcome this illusion, to merge into the universal consciousness or soul is the goal of life's endeavour, the end of the spiritual quest. To the enlightened person (*yogi, gyani, jnani*) the illusion of diversity and separateness ceases to exist, and he sees all existence as one, and to him "mine" and "thine" or any other distinctions cease to matter. This illusion is called *maya*, and the attitude of being under its influence is *dvaita* (duality) which implies egocentricity, materialism or worldliness. This is a somewhat crude statement of a highly subtle doctrine, perhaps the sublime vision vouchsafed to man in his moments of highest spiritual awakening. *Advaita* is stated in the Upanishads³⁵ and was developed into a creed by the great Shankara, who illustrated it through the figures of the serpent and the rope.³⁶ The rope appears to the eye of illusion as a serpent. With illusion gone, the serpent disappears and the rope alone remains. Thus, with the illusion or *maya* lifted, a man sees the

things and attraction of the world as of no value, and engages himself in realizing solely "the highest gain" (*paramartha*) which is *mukti* or emancipation. That, in essence, is the escape from the illusion or *maya*, and is the basis of spiritual as well as of moral life. *Advaita* explicitly, or led on to by the various systems, is at the basis of the Indian spiritual philosophy. In the Samkhya system, a distinction is made between Purusha (the eternal, conscious soul) and prakriti (the eternal unconscious matter). The Samkhya is a dualistic system. *Gyan* (*Jnana*) or enlightenment consists in removing the veil of ignorance from the soul (self). Ignorance (*avidya*) in this system consists in non-distinction of Purusha from *buddhi* and from *prakriti*. All these terms—*Purusha*, *Shiva*, *Shakti* *gian*, *buddhi*, etc., are employed by the Guru in various contexts to express his spiritual meaning.

Monism—Implicit and Explicit in Guru Nanak's Teaching

One of the great unexplored themes in Guru Nanak's teaching is that of *advaita* or monism, which precisely stands therein for the rejection of materialism and egoism, and for the acceptance of the awakening of the soul to the higher reality which is expressed in numerous ways, affirmatively and negatively. In the Guru's Word occur *dubidha*, *duja-bhava*, meaning to be in two minds or attaching oneself to objects other than the Absolute. This is an expression, in terms popular and unacademic, of *Advaita*. Another term used is *durmati* (foul-thinking) which in reality means worldliness, or egoism to transcend which means true spirituality and true morality. Hundreds of figures express this theme, such as those of the swan and the stork; of the lotus and the water-weed; of the swan and the crow—all illustrating the contrast between the spiritually awakened and unawakened, i.e., those having attained the vision of non-duality and those still in the grip of worldliness.

Since the chronology of the Guru's compositions is not fixed with any certainty, it is difficult to say which of the Guru's pronouncements came first. But from the *Puratan Janamsakhi* (already referred to), it appears that on beholding the Divine Vision, and on being inspired by the Creator when the Holy Ministry descended upon the Guru, the first words uttered by him in the Divine presence were a prose line, appearing now immediately after the creed in the *Japji*. This line, claims precedence even over the basic creed (*Mul mantra*), and is in this way the expression of the earliest vision of the Lord, beheld by the Guru. This line is the deep expression of monism or *advaita*, and brings out the essence of this great faith in a way so as to illuminate the soul, as if in a flash. In the original, it reads as the vision of Eternity, thus: *Adi sach, jugadi sach, hai bhi sach; Nanak hosi bhi sach*,

(The Eternal ever was,
 Ever shall be;
 The Eternal alone exists,
 Nanak, nothing shall last but the Eternal.)

This is a vision of that Reality and Eternity except which nothing is real. All else is evanescent, illusory. The Absolute, the Eternal, commands and covers time from eternity to eternity. Never was He not, and never shall He not-be. This is *advaita* or non-duality in ecstatic terms of the vision of the soul.

As said earlier, this vision of non-duality does not end with these phrases. It is at the core and basis of the Guru's teaching—ethical and spiritual. Whether he is exhorting man to regenerate himself spiritually; whether he is calling upon the yogi to practise true yoga instead of pursuing the vain illusion of Shakti; whatever he is, in lyrics rippling over with divine love, yearning for union with the Divine Spouse, the basis of the Guru's vision and teaching is this ideal vision of *advaita*. This means that the soul must yearn for the Eternal, be one with Him and transcend egoism. That is the true and noble action in ethical terms; that is union (the literal meaning of yoga) and that is the fulfilment of Divine love (*bhakti*), in which separation from the eternal amounts to torment. Space in this paper does not permit the illustration of these themes in detail, but a few extracts in translation may be inserted here to indicate their presence in the Guru's Word.

(a) *Monism in Essence*

That which is inside man, the same is outside him; nothing else exists;
 By divine prompting look upon all existence as one and undifferentiated;
 the same light penetrates all existence.

(*Guru Granth*, p. 599)

* * *

The Divine (like the lotus) is in the water, yet untouched by it;
 His light penetrates this water entirely; none is near and none is far;
 I find Him ever near and chant His praises.
 Nothing else exists inside or outside (man);
 All happens as He wills it;
 Listen Bharthari: This is what Nanak says after contemplation
 (pp. 411-12).

* * *

Nanak makes a humble prayer; Thou art the lake, and Thou art the
 swan on it;
 Thou the lotus and the night-buds;
 See Thy loveliness and blossom with joy (p. 23).

* * *

What should the yogi have to fear?
Trees, plants, and all that is inside and outside, is He Himself (p. 223).

* * *

The noblest of the diets is the immaculate Name;
Only the purest souls can see that Infinite Eternal light;
Wherever I look, nothing do I see but the One Absolute (p. 227).

* * *

He is Himself *Maya* and Vishnu;³⁷
He Himself creates the real as well as enjoys phenomena;
He is the calf and the milk;
He is the temple of the body and its sustaining pillar (p. 1190).

* * *

Thoughts of duality are those of impurity and
The egoist strays about in a cloud of ignorance (*Ibid*).

* * *

Mankind is crowlike, forgetful of the Truth;
Forgetting the Truth, it sweeps down on crumbs.
The mind strays ever in impure thoughts.
I have broken free of the false love of the world.
Lust and wealth are poisons—heavy and hard.
Without absorption in the Truth how may one acquire noble qualities?
This life is a house of sand built on a whirlpool;
Like a bubble just visible in torrential rain;
In substance a drop, moulded in form on God's wheel:
Know all life to be slave to the Real (p. 1187).

Only (God's) true throne will last;
All else shall pass away (p. 1279).

• • •

The love of one's child, brother, home and women is only thirst for the
delusive *maya*;
Gold and lust are the deceivers through greed and pride.
The dope of ignorance takes away all sense;
Such a dope pervades the world (p. 61).

* * *

Immerse thy light in the Divine Light;
Immerse thy consciousness in the universal mind.
When violence, egoism and restlessness of the mind are gone, sorrows
vanish.
He who, through devotion, lodges God in his heart,
Attains union with Him (pp. 21-22).

(b) *Vision of Non-duality as the Ideal in Yoga*

Live desireless amidst the desires of the world (p. 1043).

* * *

Through contemplation of the One,²⁸ the mind no longer wanders;
its restlessness ceases.

The mind, unstable as the wind, thus acquires peace through God²⁹
(p. 634).

* * *

To quench the thirst of desire, seek the water of God's name:

No such ocean is there but God.

Of all other actions the consequence is the wandering through repeated
births and deaths (p. 1411).

* * *

To the blind man the God's Name is the stick to feel the way with.

The delusive *maya* grips not one seeking the Lord's support.

Wherever I look the Divine Presence is there:

Seek where one may, inside and outside,

Through His Word may it be known (p. 752).

* * *

Full of pearls of bliss is God, the ocean;

His devotees, living ever near Him, taste of this *amrit*.

They, the approved of Him, pick up divine joy:

These, the swans,³⁰ find in the ocean the Lord of Life.

The wretched stork³¹ splashes in the muddy pond;

Wallows in the mud, getting ever filthier (p. 685).

* * *

The elixir of life that is God's Name is got through the enlightened
mind (p. 1170).

* * *

Whatsoever one sees is swayed about by desire and fear; and by the
hunger and thirst for the evils of lust and violence:

Nanak, rare are those who are indifferent to the lure of the world
(p. 214).

* * *

Meditation on the Eternal illuminates the mind. By this is it rendered
indifferent to the world in the midst of the poisons of evil (p. 661).

* * *

Seven³² are the seas full of the purest water;
 On these turns back the boat,³³
 The mind, straying towards desire is stilled;
 By the Divine grace it attains perfect poise (p. 133²)

* * *

The true *l'airagi*³⁴ is one who cuts himself off the pursuit of desire,
 and is fixed in God-realization.
 To such a one the alms of God's name has brought fulfilment and
 contentment;
 Through meditation he has quaffed *amrit*.
l'airag comes not to one in the grip of duality—
 Not as long as even a grain of duality remains.
 Thy names are: Reposing in the void; supreme value; Lord of the
 three worlds. . . (p. 634).

* * *

Through devotion to God, the mind may meditate on the Name of
 God, the essence of loveliness.
 The mind may achieve dispassion and give up egoism although everyone
 is gripped with desire and duality. Through devotion one may
 taste the ambrosial Name of God.
 God alone may save man from eternal disgrace by accepting him at
 His portal.
 Through devotion for God the mind is awakened to devotion;
 It hears the celestial harmony, and through faith contemplates the
 Word;
 And through meditation on the self, realizes the Formless,
 The touch of the Divine portal renders the mind pure;
 Through grace it gets attuned to devotion and love of God;
 By Divine grace it may be engrossed in worship day and night.
 In every being lodges the Lord, primal and eternal.
 The mind does grow enamoured of the joy in God.
 The man of God tastes of the supreme joy.
 To achieve devotion, one must sit at the feet of a preceptor.
 Nanak, I am a slave to the slaves of the man of God (p. 415).

* * *

To the mind turned stranger,³⁵ the whole world is estranged (p. 767).

* * *

In the city of the body are nine gates;
 With these the Creator has endowed all.
 In the tenth³⁶ abides the immaculate Purusha—
 Unrivalled, inaccessible except to Himself (p. 1039).

* * *

On top is a well;³⁷ contemplation draws water from it;
 The mind drinks of this *amrit* (nectar).
 God the Creator alone knows the means to achieve this;
 Only through devotion for Him may such knowledge be acquired
 (pp. 1331-32).

* * *

God is the giver of joy and is the effacer of sorrow,
 Nothing besides God do I see:
 Body, mind and worldly possession,
 All have I dedicated to God:
 Thus, saith Nanak, had I tasted the Joy Supreme (p. 1313).

* * *

Rivers get separated³⁸ in their courses;
 Only great good luck may effect their reunion.
 The temporal world³⁹ is full of sweet poison.⁴⁰
 Only the Yogi hath consciousness of this.
 Rare is the man whose mind is enlightened enough to know this and to
 be God-conscious—Such are those who meditate on Him.
 Without the awareness of God, they wander about in illusion;⁴¹
 And in their ignorance and folly are ruined.
 Those without love and consciousness of God, in the end shall
 bitterly moan.
 Believe Nanak, the long-separated soul is united with God only
 through the Eternal Word⁴² (p. 439).

(c) *Bhakti, Torment of Separation, the Urge for Reunion—
 the Achievement of the Vision and Joy of Advaita*

Were the rivers of the earth to become cows, and
 springs to run milk and butter;
 The entire earth to be sweet like sugar and the mind
 with pleasure to be saturated;
 The mountains to turn into gold and silver,
 studded with diamonds and rubies,
 May I never forget to bend in adoration to Thee,
 in joy inexpressible.
 Were all vegetation to turn into fruits delectable,
 melting against the palate;
 Were my station to be immutable, with the sun and the
 moon peregrinating me;
 May I never forget to bend in adoration to Thee,
 in joy inexpressible.
 Were my frame to be afflicted with excruciating suffering,
 Were evils to haunt me about, like Rahu and Ketu,⁴³
 With blood-thirsty tyrants to rule in triumph—
 Were this to be my destiny:
 May I still bend in adoration to Thee, in joy inexpressible,
 Were fire and cold to be my vesture; air my food;

the damsels of paradise for dalliance—all, all, these,
Nanak, are void and vain.
May I never forget to bend in adoration to Thee,
in joy inexpressible (p. 141-42).

* * *

I live only while I contemplate the Lord;
The moment of forgetfulness is death to me;
After hard penance is achieved the utterance of the Name Eternal.
Hunger for the Eternal consumeth all sorrows of life.
How may one forget, Mother,
The Lord Eternal, the Name Eternal? (p. 9).

On page 23 occurs:

Forgetfulness of the beloved even for a moment
Is the great malady of the soul;
How may one find honour at the portal without
the beloved lodged in one's heart?
Through union with God comes joy and the assuaging
of the fire of suffering, by way of noble qualities.
Pleasure lies in gold, silver, women and the
delectable⁴⁴ substance;
Pleasure lies in mounts, soft beds, mansions, the
attractions of the palate:⁴⁵
With all such pleasures, how may the Name
find place in the mind? (p. 15).

* * *

How may I live, Mother,⁴⁶ without the Lord?
Glory to Thee, Lord of the Universe!
To praise Thee I seek;
Live may I never without the Lord;
The bride is athirst for the Lord;
All night she is awake lying in wait for Him.
The Lord hath captured my heart;
He alone knows my agony.
Without the Lord, the soul is in travail and pain,
Seeking His word and the touch of His feet.
Show Thy grace, Lord; immerse me in Thyself (p. 1232).

* * *

May I beg a sacrifice time and again unto the Lord,
Were I through grace to find Him;
To find Him would I beg as doe living in the forest,
Browsing among herbs and roots.
God is my merchandise!
Thy Name my capital and substance.
To find in gesture spontaneous the Lord,
To have sight of His beauty infinite,

Would I be a *kokila* on the mango tree
 Voicing Him forth in notes unforced.
 To meet the Lord would I be a fish,
 Living ever in Him—
 The sustaining water pervasive;
 So may I hold Him in embrace now and ever.
 To meet the Lord would I be a she-serpent,
 Living in the earth's bowels, my fear consumed in joy of intoxicating
 notes.
 Nanak, never is she widowed whose light is merged in the Light
 Infinite (p. 157).

* * *

As the *chatrik* thirsting for the drop of rain;
 As the fish joying in water —
 Is Nanak satiated by tasting the joy in God (p. 226).

Further Concepts from Indian Philosophy

Guru Nanak adopted from the philosophical thought of India, as it had been modified and interpreted till his time, certain other fundamental ideas. There is ever present the idea of emancipation, expressed through terms like *mukti*, *mokh* (*moksha*) and its opposites like *bandhan* (bondage) or being chastised by Yama. Similarly, the idea of transmigration and the annulment thereof through devotion, noble actions and enlightenment or the lifting of the veil of duality finds expression through a number of figures and modes of expression. Nowhere is the idea of the Semitic or Muslim pattern of paradise and hell developed. The individual is either "sunk," which implies his remaining enmeshed in the cycle of births and deaths and suffering; or "swims across," which means the end of transmigration and the attainment of poise.

Nirvana lies in leaving unto God the fruits of desire,
 To leave all in the hands of the Creator
 Such a one is acceptable to God,
 Be he a householder or a recluse (p. 1329).

* * *

One whose ego is suppressed through the knowledge of the Truth
 Eternal, can alone be absorbed in God;
 He who follows the path untraversable will alone be freed from illusion;⁴⁷
 He in whose mind is lodged the Truth is emancipated whilst alive;
 He whose face is turned towards God will alone be immersed in the
 Truth (p. 412).

As in the Brahmanical philosophy, human life is to be directed fruitfully towards the achievement of four cardinal objectives, called *char padarath*⁴⁸ (four principal objectives). To achieve these, man is exhorted to transcend the lower desires, despite all the allurements of the world:

Man, born to pursue the four values, his abode is in the house of Shiva and Shakti.

In the appetite of passion he seeks the way of *maya*, and through ignorance throws away the Supreme value of liberation (p. 1014).

* * *

Man, born to pursue the four values, his abode is in the house of Shiva and Shakti.

To be forgetful of the one God is to lose the bout;

Yet the blind man turns away from the Name (p. 1027).

Man is, on the contrary, warned to avoid the "four rivers of fire," that is, evil passions. This concept is again classical and well established in Indian spiritual ethical thought:

Violence, attachment, avarice and wrath—

These, are the four rivers of fire:

Saith Nanak, whoever falls into these is burnt;

Only they swim across who through Divine grace worship at His feet (p. 147).

* * *

Four are the fearful rivers of fire —

Only the man of God has the understanding of the Word Celestial.

The unbeliever caught in false notions is consumed —

Only the Master saves him who is dyed in God's love (p. 1031).

* * *

The man of God extinguishes the four fires

And, so dying in God, finds the water of the Lord.

Of such the lotus of the heart is in bloom;

Is full to the brim with *amrit* (pp. 21-22).

Man is exhorted to cultivate the noble qualities which have through the ages been prized in India, are identified with the spiritual ideals of her people and which still continue to inspire the greatest teachers. It may be noted that these ideals and the language used to convey them have distinctly Indian associations, and are among those expressions of Guru Nanak's soul which place him in the line of the great spiritual teachers and prophets of India. Using the figure of solemnizing a wedding (in this context, of the individual soul with the Universal Soul), the Guru declares such a union to be productive of these sovereign qualities:

Only the God-instructed ones understand the holiness of such a union, of which are born purity, contentment, compassion and righteousness (p. 351).

In the *Japji*, stanza 16, the Guru commends the same great ideals of the soul, thus:

The Bull⁴⁹ of Righteousness is born of compassion;
 Contentment holds it together.
 What is the measure of the burden of sin under which this Bull stands
 He who knows this, is truly enlightened.

Other cardinal concepts of Indian philosophy, which occupy a pivotal place in Guru Nanak's teaching, may be classified under their respective heads. In the concept of the Godhead, apart from the idea of indivisibility, which is perhaps emphasized more than it usually is in India, there are two concepts, tending in separate directions. That the Creator is formless, is overwhelmingly averred by Guru Nanak, so much so that he has been known as much by his personal name as by his descriptive name of *Nirankari* (believer in the Formless), from *Nirankar* (Formless). For example:

One who realizes the visible as merged in the Formless,
 And finds poise in the truth of God's invisible power —
 Such a one shall not be subject to the cycle of births (p. 414).

In another place, dilating on the benefits of good actions, the Guru states these to lead to the highest goal of realization of the Formless:

The vine of good actions flourishes and bears fruit in the form of the
 soul's attachment to God:⁵⁰
 He has no form or feature;
 To know Him is to hear the ineffable melody — the note immaculate
 (p. 351).

Along with the concept of the Absolute as Formless in Guru Nanak's teaching is the concept of God (*Ishvara*, *Parmeshvara*) as "attributed," in the sense in which Ramanuja philosophized in his vision of *Vishist-Advaita* or non-duality with attributes. God is beyond the "three attributes" (*triguna*), but is not without bearing the noble attributes for which He may be loved and worshipped. As a matter of fact, the entire approach of *bhakti* centres on the lovable attributes of the object adopted for adoration. *Bhakti* is an important element in Guru Nanak's compositions and arises from the yearning of the soul for union with the Universal Soul. Not devotion to any 'Incarnation' as in the case of the usual run of those who saw *bhakti*, but to the Eternal, the Formless, conceived as endowed with all the attributes of loveliness. In the examples of the Guru's poetry of *bhakti* quoted earlier, the imagery is that of the poetry of love and in its passion even of eroticism. This is passion arising from the pursuit of "absorption," the state of "passionlessness" which is the perfection of yoga and enlightenment. This paradox is resolved on attempting a deeper understanding of these two tendencies. But at this point what needs to be stressed is the conception of God with attributes, the medium of personification through which the mind

habitually turns towards Him, and the superbly beautiful poetry which results from such an attitude of mind. It is the poetry of poignant love and is in the true Indian convention, wherein the lover is the female person, pouring out the sorrows of separation from the spouse, gone abroad for merchandise or war, or indifferent to his sincere loving wife through his moods of dalliance. This theme and its expression through this poetic convention occur in numerous places in the Guru's compositions. Its sublimest expression is in *Bara-mah* (the seasons) in the measure *Tukhari*, stated to be the Guru's last composition, which issued from his soul a few days before his immersion into the Eternal, his union for which he yearns and sings therein.

There is a whole wealth of imagery through which this theme of devotion is expressed, such as that of the *chatrik* (the rain-bird) thirsting for a drop of rain, of the fish gasping for water, of the *chakwi*⁵¹ for the sun and of the *chakor*,⁵¹ for the moon. The tendencies and tones of such poetry would be familiar, in general, to readers of mystical poetry, Eastern and Western. The essence of such poetry is that its passion arises precisely from indifference to the world. That is how at a deeper level the paradox, as mentioned above, is reconciled.

Ethical Determinism

Another cardinal concept which figures prominently in the Guru's teaching is what may be called the ethical determinism. This implies, as would be familiar to the student of Indian philosophy, the paramount importance of man's actions in determining his destiny. Numerous texts make not only bliss and bane, both in the worldly sense and in the spiritual sense, dependent upon man's own actions, but also upon how he is to stand in the ultimate count with the Creator. In the concluding stanza of the *Japji*, it is affirmed that:

Nearness to God or distance from Him depends upon man's own actions.

In stanza 20 of the *Japji*, man is exhorted through the figure of the cultivator (a figure of frequent occurrence in the Guru's teaching) to cultivate good action with a view to attaining bliss:

Sow thou the seed, and eat the fruit thereof;
Saith Nanak, by Divine Ordinance dost thou come into the world and
go out thence.

In the verse, there occurs the last-quoted concept of Divine Ordinance. There occurs elsewhere the related concept of Divine Grace (*prasad*, *mehar*, *nadar*) which is the manifestation of a mysterious beneficent power ruling over the universe. Whereas man's actions are the determining

factors in his emancipation or bondage in the spiritual sense, there remains the factor of grace whose mystery cannot be penetrated by man. The Divine Ordinance does not determine individual destiny, but only lays down the moral law. Man's actions are retributed according to this law, in which there is nothing arbitrary. Even the inclination of man towards good actions is determined by God's grace. This insistence on the co-presence in human life of action and ordinance or grace almost always occurs in the Guru's teaching, and is repeated frequently. In stanza 4 of the *Japji* again, this relationship is stated:

Through good actions comes to man the vesture of the human life;
But through Divine grace alone is found the door of emancipation.

Again, in stanza 34 of the *Japji*, it is stated that:

Reckoning is there made according to deeds:
Just He Himself, just is His court.

On page 147, mentioning the "four rivers of fire" (already referred to), the Guru says that these can be crossed only "through devotion acquired as the fruit of noble actions."

Bhai Gurdas, a great poet and devoted scholar of the philosophy of Sikhism, and a close companion of the Fifth Guru, in his celebrated canto II (*Var I*), stanza 43, reports Guru Nanak in a discussion with the Yogis as expressing the view that not a guide or preceptor can bring emancipation to anyone, but his own actions. "Had I the power that my mere word were to determine the emancipation of anyone I please, all such miracles would be as showdowns." The meaning being not only that such a thing is impossible, but the possession of miraculous powers is by itself not indicative of one's spiritual merit, which comes from devotion.

In Hinduism, in general, these two concepts occur and recur, though in Buddhism there is almost an exclusive emphasis on the determining nature of actions. A few more texts may be quoted on this theme. The Fourth Guru, Ram Das, states the importance of action, thus:

Who hath power to provide sustenance to human beings?
They partake of what they themselves sow (p. 1264).

Again, Kabir whose compositions are included for reverent study in the *Guru Granth*, states this relationship thus:

Emancipation comes from God; though the exhortation to devotion to
God comes from a human guide (p. 1373).

Here "devotion" is the action which man must perform to qualify for Divine grace.

Emphasizing righteous endeavour, the Guru makes it clear beyond doubt that man may expect grace or emancipation not without his own endeavour. He must engage in such action, though, as stated above, such inclination itself comes from Divine grace. On page 415, the statement occurs:

Turn wheresoever, devotion for God may come to you;
And dyed in the love of God, chant His praises.

In other places, the two concepts of action and grace are placed in conjunction:

Man's accumulated actions are his treasure.
My heart yearns to beg this boon of Thee:
To fill the vessel of the heart with Thy love —
This from the Day of Creation is the true wealth given by Thee
(p. 378).

* * *

The reprobate man undergoes suffering in eighty-four hundred thousand
hells —
To him comes such retribution for his actions:
Except through the light given by the true Preceptor,⁵² no emancipation
comes —
Man is in the grip of his actions which alone bind him (p. 1028).

Action as Determinant

Some are tossed about in transmigration,
And find not a resting-place in their real home, God;
Bound by their actions, they continue to accumulate further sins:
Blind, they see nothing, enveloped by the evil of avarice and egoism
(p. 1029).

* * *

Joy and suffering are caused by the actions of previous births:
The mystery of this is known alone to the Lord who hath given these.
Man, whom canst thou blame for thy suffering?
Bear now the hard retribution for thy own actions (p. 1030).

* * *

All creatures carry with them what is destined for each;
This is determined by their own actions:
Only that will happen which God hath destined.
They are fools and idiots who think their will may operate.
Saith Nanak, the Eternal is the limitless treasury of good (p. 1169).

Again, the mystery of the conjunction of acts and Divine Ordinance:

What God hath ordained that is His will;
 What He hath recorded in Primal Time is ineffaceable.
 Man, impelled by God's will, engages in action
 Absorption in God's Word may, however, merge him in the Eternal
 (p. 1275).

* * *

A man remaining ignorant of God's commandments is like one who is blind, and is involved in evil;
 Through Divine prompting he may acquire the love of God, and thus through his actions achieve honour (p. 1330).

* * *

Good or evil retribution is precisely the result of one's own deeds
 (*Var Asa*, p. 471).

It may be noted that in common parlance among people professing various forms of Hinduism (also among the Sikhs) the usual word for destiny is *Karma*, which originally means 'action.' This is the strongest evidence of what has been called here the ethically determined destiny that is being shaped by man's actions and not by the arbitrary fiat of a divine power.

Ideal Action—Expectation of Reward Disregarded—Duty

One of the ethical principles, rooted in the spiritual vision of a whole race is the Indian idea particularly associated with the message enunciated in the *Gita*, inculcating righteous action without the expectation of reward. This idea is too well known in India to need elaboration here. Guru Nanak has called upon man, in various contexts, particularly in his critique of the doctrine and practice of yoga, so to instruct the mind as to be above the lure of desires. That, according to him, is true yoga—the spirit and essence of this great path. Yoga is non-attachment to worldly objectives. The true yogi is one who "has given up attachment and transcended the lure of the world, and found his true home, i.e., in the soul."⁵³ The yogi is one "who while living is as if dead to passions."⁵⁴ "To him joy and sorrow are alike."⁵⁵ "He consumes worldly desire in the word,"⁵⁶ i.e., in absorption in God.

To live immaculate among the impurities of the world is the true
 Yoga-practice (p. 1189).

* * *

He who surrenders unto God, who made him, his desires, truly
attains *nirvana*.

Saith Nanak: He who knows all to be God's is accepted by Him,
Be he a householder or a recluse (p. 1329).

* * *

Nirvana lies in leaving unto God the fruits of desire;
To leave all in the hands of the Creator:
Such a one is acceptable to God,
Be he a householder or a recluse (p. 1329, already cited).

* * *

Meditation on the Eternal illuminates the soul;
By this, one may achieve indifference to the world amidst its poison;
God is the Eternal Master —
He may grant the highest bliss even while man is fixed in duties of
daily life (p. 661).

It may be pointed out that the author of the *Gita*, too, is exploring the true meaning of yoga which he equates with enlightenment, devotion and disinterested endeavour rather than with any ritual. The Guru is giving his interpretation of the meaning of true yoga on similar lines. The theme of yoga, its true meaning, and particularly the orientation of its idea in the direction of a noble and fruitful action, which the Guru has called *seva* (service) is a prominent feature of the Guru's teaching, and absorbs, perhaps, the bulk of his compositions in elucidating its various aspects. The Guru, while elucidating the idea of yoga, rejects ritual and particularly *Hatha* (the yogic way of forcible or physical effort), but concentrates the seeker's effort on devotion (*manan*), and absorption (*samadhi*). The path and its means commended by him are spiritual processes and not any physical or mystagogic ritual. He, however, unlike the *Gita*, does not lend countenance to the incarnation principle, round which the *Gita* legend is built. This point has already been stressed. It may be pointed out here that in the Guru's compositions, the terminology of yoga, particularly adopted, as it had been, from the ancient philosophical literature on the subject and had been further evolved during the medieval period, is freely used, with a view to re-orientating its idea, and relating it to true spirituality. His own pronouncements on yoga tend towards identification with the spiritual vision—enlightenment—are the achievement of non-duality and the restraint of passions and the harnessing of the entire spiritual and moral energy to the performance of righteous action in the widest spheres of individual and social relations. The Guru castigated the ideal of renunciation in the ordinary, obvious sense understood by the various orders of recluses, but commended the renunciation of desire, as stated already. Most of this in relation to Guru Nanak is practically unknown to the average

students of religion in India and elsewhere. Such ignorance has inhibited that fully reverent understanding of Guru Nanak which is due to one who gave afresh to India the spiritual and moral vision in terms of the values evolved by her own seers.

The Vision and the Prophecy

The spiritual vision of Guru Nanak is couched in poetry of devotion and meditation. This usually takes the form of song and is set to music, while equally often it has the inner movement of meditation and the progress of the mind and the soul from point to point of spiritual experience. In form and content, this poetry further is of the nature of prophecy. A prophet inspires his age with a fresh vision of those fundamental truths to which men are apt to grow indifferent amidst their material, egoistic concerns. With his insight, he lifts the veil from reality and instils in the human spirit a new fervour, a passion for truth, and the heroism to live and die for certain ideals. This is the direction taken by Guru Nanak's vision from which his poetry proceeds. Whereas in his own time, and in the age preceding his there were in India enough religious teachers who engaged themselves in various kinds of spiritual exercises and drew men to the practice of this code or ritual, they were like eyes suffering from myopia, seeing only a little distance ahead and not aware of the longer and deeper issues of life, whether those concerned the individual or the group. Particularly missing from their vision was that large and life-giving outlook which is called humanism; and of which compassion, charity, fellow-feeling, forgiveness—all that in the visions of the sages of India had been called *dharma*—are the essential constituents. It was the husk, the outer shell, and not the spirit which the savants, recluses and those who set up as the guides of mankind were preaching and practising. Some others, too, who had been disturbed by the inadequacy of the practice of creeds and tradition-bound faiths, had made humanitarianism and the relationship of man with God without the intercession of the priest or the preacher the main theme of their missionary activity. They did a great deal to bring the light of goodliness and good living to the common masses. In place of the selfish priests, preaching hardened code and ritual, these devotees—*bhaktas*—taught men the way of love and compassion. Their work was valuable, indeed, but it too suffered from severe limitations. It was confined to the reform and purification of the individual life, and lacked what it would be justified to call perspective. Enveloping the individual life was the malaise in the vaster sphere of the community, the nation, if one may use a term which at that time perhaps could not with justice be applied to the vast entity that was India. These good men of limited perspective were not inducted into the implications of what was passing in the larger spheres of the life of groups and nations. They were aware

of the need for love, and had, perhaps in a vague way, faith in the succour of goodness by the Divine power. But no one in this age of moral and spiritual chaos remembered two of the cardinal principles enunciated in the *Gita*: One, that the Lord intervenes in the affairs of mankind whenever truth and righteousness begin to decline. Evil-doers are chastized and the virtuous are succoured. Again that, not the life of the recluse which, in moral terms, means escaping or shirking duty, but of the man who undertakes action in a righteous cause, howsoever unpalatable, is the life to be commended. In the *Gita*, the first of these principles is mythologized through the mighty assertion of Krishna, the Incarnation of Vishnu—nay, the Supreme Being Himself. The second is dramatized through the moral perplexity of Arjuna, which for him is resolved by Krishna in exhorting him to perform action, casting aside sentimental rationalization of his pacifism. As against the priest, the recluse and the anchorite, each steeped in the false philosophy of life, Guru Nanak enunciated mighty moral principles—prophecies for the age and for mankind, in general. In the *Japji*, the final stage recounted by him of spiritual development is that of the “Heroism of Mighty Endeavour” (*Sarm-Khand*). Those undertaking such heroism are resplendent with spiritual and moral beauty which beggars description. They are subject neither to transmigration nor to the delusion of *maya*, i.e., worldliness. The sphere of these heroes is bliss attained through the purity of conduct. In the *Var Asa*, there are the examination and reappraisal of creed and ritual, the social and political scene, of false moral criteria, falsehood in thought, word and deed and the general moral blindness afflicting mankind. Side by side with the expression of stern moral judgement there are notes of devotion and humility before the Creator, which sound like the tuning of soft-stringed instruments amidst the clanging trumpets. The total meaning of this great disquisitional poem, the *Var-Asa*, is to subject all life to the vision of higher morality and spirituality and to assert the imperativeness of the moral law, without which all ritual is meaningless and evil. Worldly glory is petty and futile before the might of God, who may take it away whenever it pleases Him. “Should He withdraw His favour, monarchs He reduces to a blade of grass.” In the mighty quartet of poems known as *Babar-Vani* or Babar’s Ordinance, the Guru who was witness to the carnage in the Punjab wrought by the victorious soldiery of Babar, the Mughal, not only pours out lament on the humiliation of a great people, the Indians, but enunciates again a mighty principle—what it would be true to call a moral-spiritual philosophy of history. Men and nations suffer because they lose virtue and truthfulness. The lure of luxurious living and wealth are the true enemies of man, who forgets that an hour might come wherein truth alone will be able to stand. Mysterious as the operation of the Divine Will is in situations like Babar’s victory and carnage, it is unthinkable to accuse God of any injustice. His law

is in operation "the just law"—that of morality—and He watches unconcerned its operation. The lesson is for man not to let go the moral anchor. As mentioned earlier, the Guru has called God in a number of places *Asur-Sanghar* (the Destroyer of Demons). Truth and righteousness must ultimately prevail. In a mighty vision says the Guru: "Nanak, evil must be destroyed; righteousness alone shall ultimately prevail."⁵⁷ This is borne out by the spiritual intuition of man as also by the evidence of history and mythology. This point has been illustrated earlier. But this enjoins on man the duty to endeavour in the way of God. Not the fatuous hope that Divine intervention will somehow set things right, but the sacrifice and heroism of God-inspired men will frustrate evil and make justice prevail. Heroic men may even lay down their lives in the cause of God. "Blessed is the death of those heroic men, who lay down their lives in an approved cause."⁵⁸

Should thy heart be filled with the passion of love for God,
Step into it with thy head placed on thy palm;
He who treads this path —
Must be prepared to give up life without demur (p. 1412).

This is the enunciation of the duty to embrace martyrdom when the cause of truth so requires—the first instance in India of the enunciation of such a moral principle. The Guru cast repeated contempt on anchorites and recluses who withdrew from the scene of human life to engage in what to him appeared to be a life of moral cowardice. Interpreting the Guru's view, the great savant, Bhai Gurdas, puts into his mouth these words to the Siddhas (Yogis) whom he accosted in the higher ranges of the Himalayas; "The Siddhas have concealed themselves in mountain-caves; who then may take mankind across?" That is, who may save humanity from evil and suffering? To him the spiritual life was not complete without man's entering on the sphere of duty. This, he called *seva* (devoted service), as said earlier. It is commended in several places in the holy text of the *Guru Granth*.

I have learnt by the light given by the Perfect Master:
Recluse, hero, celibate or *sannyasi*,
None may expect to earn merit without devoted service —
Service in which lies the essence of purity (p. 992).

* * *

Only through devoted service in this world
May one find a place at the Divine Portal (p. 261).

* * *

Through learning man may do good unto others (p. 356).

Not many in his own day could be aware of the power and depth of Guru Nanak's vision with regard to the character of the Supreme Being, the true nature of the spiritual experience and the moral process. What he saw and spoke was entirely revolutionary and out of step with the established encrusted traditionalism and ritualism which passed for religion. His Word was a vision born of spiritual experience new, yet related as is the fruit to the root, to the ancient spiritual thinking of India. It was thinking purified rid of its primitive accretions, and put in harmony with the Time-Spirit, which called for a broad, tolerant outlook and emphasis on action, as against the individualist escapism prevalent in the age. On this theme of the emphasis in Guru Nanak's teaching on action, by which alone is faith or piety perfected, a vast discourse may be written. Here are only brief hints, indicative of the direction which his vision of life took, and by which his prophecy was guided. This aspect of his work, however, has not been fully understood. The true significance of his teaching was lost sight of in the blinding atmosphere of prejudice born of opposition to his rejection of what was false and spiritually irrelevant.

At the close, the question raised in the beginning may be reiterated: What causes operated to resist the wider acceptance of Guru Nanak's Word and vision, particularly in the region in which he took his birth, and brought his message in its language which he made rich and vital, with lofty content and great poetic power, from a folk tongue which it before his time was?

This is a question which demands an answer, and perhaps points to a great failing in those who closed their minds and judged Guru Nanak by narrow criteria and dead traditional formulae rather than through minds opened to the influence of Truth. Perhaps on the momentous occasion of this quincentenary of his birth, the spurt of devotional and intellectual activity may bring about a clearer, better understanding of what he has meant particularly for the purification of the soul of India.

Some further examples are given below, out of a vast number, showing the Guru's use of mythology and traditional beliefs, illustrating the points about its use, involving:

- (a) belief in the historical authenticity of mythology;
- (b) its use for allegorical purposes;
- (c) the symbolic character which the objects of traditional belief had acquired in view of their strong involvement with the sacred sentiments of the people, shared no doubt by the Guru, and
- (d) the Guru's complete dissociation, beyond any possibility of doubt, from the belief that these mythological forms and other objects are co-sharers with the Creator, the Absolute, in drawing man's worship. With these clear *caveats*, some further details of this subject may be cited for reference:

Narad and Sharda⁵⁹ are only Thy servants;
 In the three worlds, the highest of the high are just thy servants.
 Everything is within thy power;
 Thou art the provider of all —
 All Creation is Thy handiwork alone (p. 1028).

* * *

Brahma was born of the lotus rising from Vishnu's navel,
 And with speech and voice perfected, chanted the Vedas.
 Still, the greatness of God is uncompassable;
 And all—gods and men—are groping in a mist, subject to transmigration
 (page 489).

On pages 1343-44, illustrating the theme of man's helplessness before the inevitability of destiny, which is ultimately known only to God, and under His operation, though apportioned to man according to his actions, the Guru mentions the following myths and legends, widely known:

- (a) Indra lusting after Ahalya, the wife of the sage Gautama, and cursed to bear on his person thousands of impressions of the female genitals.
- (b) Hari Chand,⁶⁰ despite his great feat of charity, being sold as a slave in the common market.
- (c) King Bali, humbled by God in the guise of a dwarf.
- (d) King Janmeja, forced in a fit of passion to the heinous sin of the murders of Brahmins.

On page 1328, in a vision of God, the Eternal Creator, are mentioned the great deities as His seekers and worshippers, thus:

He, for whose realization Brahma chanted the Vedas, and Shankara⁶¹
 gave up the world;
 He whose secrets not the gods themselves could penetrate.

The same theme again—pages 1279-80:

He created Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha⁶² and the Vedas;
 To Brahma he gave the Vedas, and inspired him to worship;
 Among ten *avatars* was one, the King Rama,⁶³
 Who pursued and destroyed demons and subjugated them.
 Ishvar⁶⁴ and Maheshvar⁶⁵ worshipped Him —
 His secret still eluded them. . .

* * *

Through God-given enlightenment did Krishna lift the Govardhana,⁶⁶
 Through God-given enlightenment did Rama make stones float on
 sea-water: ⁶⁵
 By acquiring God-given wisdom may one attain the supreme state⁶⁶
 God Himself 'melts away the illusion'⁶⁷ (p. 1041).

* * *

The Dispenser of All gave the strength to the God-instructed one⁶⁸ to
 make the bridge;
 To sack Lanka⁶⁹ and chastise the demon.

The man of God, Rama Chandra, destroyed the mighty Ravana;
 Through divine inspiration did Bibhikhan convey⁷⁰ the secrets of Lanka.
 The man of God made stones⁷¹ float on the sea;
 The man of God brought liberation to millions⁷² upon millions.⁷³
 (From the *Siddha-Goshti*, p. 942).

In a critique of the attitude of accepting the deities as the Creator, the Supreme Being:

He who created air, water and the entire earth and bound in law water
 and fire —
 Does it add to His greatness to state that He destroyed Ravana, the
 ten-headed Ravana, who in blindness of arrogance got his head
 cut off?⁷⁴
 What can man's praise avail to encompass Thy greatness?
 Thou fillest all—providing the entire creation in Thy trance.
 He who created all beings, and controls their destiny —
 What praise is it for Him that He subjugated the serpent Kali?⁷⁵
 Whose husband art Thou and who is Thy wife —
 Thou who dost pervade all existence?
 (God is He) to realize the extent of whose creation
 Brahma himself descended into the stalk of the
 Lotus along with Vishnu, the Provider;⁷⁶
 And failed His secret to penetrate:
 Is it to add even a particle to his greatness to say that he slew Kamsa?⁷⁷
 He it was who churned the ocean of milk and created the Jewels,
 which the demons violently claimed was their doing.⁷⁸
 Saith Nanak: Foolish it is to think He is nowhere.
 He blessed creation with the Jewels.

* * *

Spiritual states and ideals symbolized by myths and objects held sacred:

- (a) Thy praise is Ganga and Banaras (p. 358).
- (b) Devotion to God equals bathing at the sixty-eight bathing-places (the *Japji*).⁷⁹
- (c) Why bathe at bathing-spots? Devotion to God is the true bathing-spot;
 The true *tirtha* is meditation on God and enlightenment.
 Illumination of the mind apart, God is the true sacred spot and
 bathing-place, the ten sacred occasions and the perpetual Holy Day...
 God's immaculate Word is the never-dying light,
 Eternally pure — the true ritual bath⁸⁰ (p. 687).
- (d) The Beloved's⁸¹ qualities have entered my soul;
 Listen Thou, of loveliness surpassing!
 To win Thy pleasure is for me ablution in sacred waters⁸²—
 The Ganga, the Jamuna, the Triple Confluence holy,⁸³ the seven seas,
 Charities, alms-giving, worship: all such blessings come from knowing
 the Lord Supreme — Eternal, immutable.
 Saith Nanak: With *Magh*⁸⁴ cometh the supreme joy:
 In worship of the Lord is ablutions at sixty-eight bathing-places.⁸⁵
 (The *Bara-Maha* in measure *Tukhari*, page 1109).

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Such names, in essence, for the Absolute, along with numerous others are found used in the spiritual compositions of Guru Nanak and his successors in the Holy Office.
2. The first, Golden Age.
3. The Second Age.
4. Here moral heroism born of continence is meant.
5. The Third Age, which towards its close saw Krishna.
6. The Iron Age of sin, still continuing.
7. Fire of sin and suffering is meant.
8. Lit. falsehood.
9. *Original, sunya samadhi.*
10. *Shiva.*
11. *Maya-Moha* in the original.
12. *Oankar* is the Punjabi form of *Omkar*, and occurs thus in the Sikh Scripture.
13. *Karta-Purakh*, is the popular form of the Sanskrit *Karta-Purusha* (Lit. the Creator-Male), one of the philosophical names to designate the Supreme.
14. Contrary to common belief, the *Puratan Janamsakhi*, the oldest existing account of Guru Nanak's life, states that the Guru enunciated this composition at Banaras. This sounds true and appropriate, since its adoration of Oankar or Om (the Eternal Principle) was chanted in Banaras, the home of the ancient mythologies and polytheistic creeds of India. It would be just in keeping with the bold vision of Guru Nanak to voice forth his faith in the One Supreme Being in this sacred centre of old orthodoxies.
15. A formulation of *Om* for rhythm. Syllable is *Akkhar* or *Akshara*. *Om* has been called *Akshara* (Indestructible syllable) in the Upanishads. In the ancient scriptures as also in the *Guru Granth* it is written as a syllable and not as at present, as a word.
16. Rama and Gopal (the latter a periphrastic name of Krishna) are popular names of hero-gods, but in common parlance have come to acquire meaning as the Supreme Creator.
17. The last verse here is an obvious repudiation of polytheistic mythology and the assertion of faith in the Indivisible Supreme Being alone.
18. Vishnu.
19. The consort of Shiva, equated with Shakti.
20. Popular form of Hrinaya-Kashyapa.
21. For Guru Nanak's use of 'Rama' and 'Krishna' as synonyms for the Creator, and not as mere names of the deities or mythic heroes, for example, the following text from *Var-Asa* may be quoted: ..
 Krishna is the name for the God of gods, the very Soul of Divinity.
22. The Maharashtra saint Namdev, in a hymn reproduced in the *Guru Granth*, containing some Persian sentences, invokes God as *Mir-Mukand* (The Lord-Emancipator). Here *Mir* is Muslim and *Mukand* is Hindu — a well-known attribute of God as Krishna. Namdev also brings together in a hymn *Kalandar* and *Kesava* — the former standing for a Muslim mystical personality and the latter for the Hindu god, Vishnu.
23. The Guru's receptive attitude towards the devotional verses and lyrics of a Muslim saint like Farid proceeded as much from the desire to inculcate tolerance in the minds of the people as to demonstrate the universality of moral and spiritual truths, irrespective of the source from which they came. (Farid's compositions were known to Guru Nanak and were commented upon by him.)
24. There is, however, an elaborate mythology, inclusive of angelology and demo-

nology in the Semitic tradition, which is largely shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These faiths inculcate literal belief in these quasi-celestial and supernatural beings.

25. *Mandukya Upanishad, Kathopanishad.*
26. This simile is already found in the *Mandukya Upanishad.*
27. The original word "*kant*" means consort, i.e. Vishnu, the eternal consort of *maya*.
28. Original, *Oankar*.
29. Lit. the Name.
30. In Indian spiritual tradition, the symbol of the pure soul, which has transcended worldliness.
31. The stork is the symbol of low worldliness; the pond is the symbol of gross sensual pleasures.
32. The senses, the mind and the soul.
33. The boat of desire turning away from the world.
34. Lit. one grown indifferent to the world — used almost as synonym for yogi
35. Original, *Pardesi* — the implication is of *vairag* or indifference to the world.
36. The soul, pure consciousness,
37. The soul, the faculty divine,
38. Separation of the individual soul from the Universal Soul is meant.
39. Lit. each age.
40. Sin.
41. *Maya* or the ignorance born of its veil.
42. Enlightenment; God-consciousness.
43. Demons, supposed to grip the sun and the moon, thus eclipsing them.
44. Lit. fragrant.
45. Lit. sweet things and meat.
46. The mother addressed implies the speaker to be the female — the soul — in accordance with the romantic *Bhakti* convention.
47. i.e., *maya* and duality.
48. These are: *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (success in the world), *kama* (fulfilment of legitimate desires) and *moksha* (liberation from transmigration).
49. The mythical bull, believed to support the earth.
50. Rama-Nama.
51. Names of birds.
52. Stands here, as elsewhere, for God.
53. *Guru Granth*, p. 419.
54. Ibid., p. 661.
55. Ibid., p. 1256.
56. Ibid., p. 413.
57. Ibid., p. 1283.
58. Ibid., p. 579
59. Narad is the messenger of the gods, with a propensity to be something of a busybody; Sharda or Saraswati is the goddess of learning and the arts.
60. Harish Chandra, the truthful.
61. Shiva.
62. These are different names of Shiva.
63. The legendary hero-god, whose name has become a synonym for the Creator.
64. A mountain lifted by Krishna.
65. Refers to the bridge on the sea made by Rama to cross over to Lanka to destroy the demon Ravana.
66. Liberation is meant.
67. *Maya* is meant.
68. Rama,

69. Ravana's kingdom. He is the 'demon' in this line.
70. Ravana's brother, who helped Rama.
71. Reference to the bridge made by Rama.
72. Lit., carry across water.
73. Three hundred and thirty millions.
74. Refers to exaltation of Rama as the Creator.
75. Reference to the feat of Krishna.
76. Refers to a Puranic legend.
77. Kamsa was Krishna's maternal uncle, a tyrant slain by him.
78. Refers to the famous Puranic myth of the creation of the 'Fourteen jewels' including *amrit* (water of immortality) churned out of the sea by gods and demons.
79. Original for bathing-spot is *tirtha* (Lit., a river bank) with applied meaning of the sacred bathing-spot of which so many are sanctified in different parts of India.
80. Literally, a dip in holy water.
81. God.
82. *Tirtha*.
83. Tribeni—the Triple Confluence at Prayag or Allahabad.
84. January-February; *Magh* is held to be a sacred month.
85. Explained above.

XXV

GURU NANAK AND THE SIDDHAS

BHAI JODH SINGH

In going through Guru Nanak's *Bani* one finds a large number of hymns addressed to yogis. A dialogue between the Siddhas and Guru Nanak, consisting of 73 stanzas is recorded in the *Ramkali* measure. Two Siddhas are mentioned in it by name, Charpat and Lohari-Pa. The former was a disciple of Shri Gorakh Nath and was himself one of the nine Nathas. In this dialogue, Guru Nanak portrays the difference between his own creed and that of the yogis. In the *Asa* measure, three hymns¹ are addressed to Bharthari who founded one of the twelve sects of yogis called the Vairag Panth. In the *Ramkali* measure, hymn No. 5 is addressed to Machhindra. In the *Var* of the same measure, besides Charpat and Bharthari, the names of Isar (Shiva who is designated as Adi Nath in the Siddha literature), Gorakh and Gopi Chand are mentioned.² It appears that in these *sloks*, Guru Nanak gives the gist of their beliefs and in the last *slok* he gives his own views.

Besides the long dialogue and the hymns alluded to above, there are many more hymns in which the Guru has addressed Avdhus (Avadhutas), Rawals and yogis explaining the uselessness of merely sticking to outer symbols and craze for supernatural powers and long life. The eighth and the 28th to 31st *paudis* of the *Japji* deal with these subjects. In *Siri Rag*, hymn 1, para 3, hymn 2, paras 2 and 3, hymn 8, para 2 express his preference for the Name in contrast to the pursuit of *siddhis*. In *Var Majh*, *slok* 1, *paudi* 4 and *slok* 1, *paudi* 19 refer to the same subject. In the *Gauri* measure, *shabad* No. 4.3.15 is addressed to a Rawal, explaining the real way to joy. In the same measure, *Gauri Astpadis* 6 and 7 deal with the same theme. In the *Asa Rag*, besides the three hymns addressed to Bharthari which have been already mentioned, hymn 8 portrays the right method of joy.

In *Bilawal Thitti*, *paudi* 11, the real significance of the symbols is explained. In hymns 4 and 11 in the *Ramkali Rag* and *Astpadis* 2, 8 and 9 and in para 3 of the 5th *Astpadi*, discussion on the same subject is continued. In *paudi* 15 of *Oankar*, the right interpretation of *samadhi* is stated. In *Rag Maru*, hymns 9 and 11, the Guru gives his own method of the real union. In *Maru Solhe* 22, stanzas 12 to 15, he decries the

sticking to the mere outer symbols. In *Basant Hindol* 5, he deprecates pride in the outer garb. In *Parbhathi Rag*, the right method has been explained to an Avdhu (Avadhuta). In the first two lines of the *Parbhathi Astpadi* 3, he dwells on the uselessness of merely donning a garb and not living the real life.

These frequent discussions show the influence that the yogis enjoyed over the common people in the Punjab at the time of the advent of Guru Nanak. The Siddhas through a display of supernatural powers, the use of *jantras*, *mantras* and *tantras*, the expectation of blessing and the fear of curses created awe in their minds and the people in terror ministered to their wants and became their followers. Mostly, they belonged to the Split-eared sect of the yogis. The Musalmans, too, desirous of securing those powers were freely admitted to the fraternity.

Professor Dwivedi in his book, *Nath Sampradaya*, quotes some remarks of Ibn Batuta, the Egyptian traveller, regarding these yogis that the hair on the heads of the yogis reached up to their feet and their bodies were covered with ashes. Owing to ascetic practices, they looked pale. The Musalmans, desirous of obtaining powers to show wondrous feats also followed them. In the first instance, Batuta saw them in the camp of the ruler of Mavish-Unnhar, Tarm Shirin. They were fifty in number. They lived in caves dug under the earth and came out only to answer the call of nature. They blew something like a horn in the morning, in the evening and at night. Ibn Batuta saw their miraculous powers with his own eyes. On his evidence, one could admit that for a long time the common people looked at them with a sense of fear. In those days, a tiger was working havoc in a village named Brown near Gwalior. The people of that village told Batuta that he was a yogi who assumed the form of a tiger and ate up men.

It appears that their methods did not change since the time of Ibn Batuta. Bhai Gurdas in his first *Var* has written an account of Guru Nanak's visit to the golden mountain where he saw an assembly of eighty-four Siddhas. They enquired of Guru Nanak what power brought him there. He replied that he repeated the name of God and with loving devotion contemplated Him. On being questioned a second time about his name, he told them he was called Nanak. They then asked him how people lower down³ conducted themselves. The Baba replied that in the dark night (*Amavas*) of falsehood, ignorance reigned supreme everywhere, and he was searching the world for the moon of truth. The earth has been overwhelmed with sin and the bull (of *dharma*) underneath has sent forth a cry. "The Siddhas have hidden themselves in the mountains, who is going to save the world? The yogis without gnosis know only how to keep their bodies covered with ashes day and night. Without a guru the world is drowning."

"The dog-faced Kali Age has come and the carrion has become the food of the kings. They commit sins, and the hedge which was to protect

the crop is eating it up. Their subjects, blind on account of ignorance, utter false praises of them. The disciples call the tunes and the gurus dance to them. The followers sit in their homes and the gurus visit them there. The *qazis* (judges) have become corrupt, they receive bribes and deprive people of just rights. The love between a wife and a husband depends upon money, the source of which is not questioned. Sin has taken hold of the world."

On hearing this bold reply, writes Bhai Gurdas, the Siddhas thought of converting the Guru to their own creed. Such a yogi, they thought, would add luster to their *Panth* in the Iron Age. They wanted to create an impression of their miraculous powers on him and gave him a *khappar* (an earthen pot) to fetch water from a nearby pond. On arriving there, the Guru found it full of jewels and rubies but without water. They had calculated that the Guru would be tempted by the precious stones and might gather them. The Guru, on the other hand, came empty-handed and reported the absence of water in the pond. By his own teachings he satisfactorily answered their queries and established the distinctiveness of his own path, the path of the Name, which was the treasure-house of all happiness. According to Bhai Gurdas, after settling at Kartarpur, the Guru put off the garb of an itinerant preacher and dressed himself in the clothes of an ordinary householder. Hearing of a fair at Achal near Batala, the Guru went there. The yogis owned the place of worship and, in fact, it was their annual gathering. By that time Guru Nanak had become famous in that vicinity and people flocked to the place where he sat to have a sight of him. As is usual on such occasions, they made monetary offerings in abundance. This aroused jealousy in the minds of the yogis. A small incident enraged them further. A troupe of Rasdharis' was engaged in their usual folk dances and people showed their appreciation by putting coins in a pot placed for the purpose. A yogi surreptitiously hid that pot and the troupe sensing the loss of offerings were nonplussed. Guru Nanak, who was also one of the audience, pointed to the place where the pot was hidden, and the yogis took it as an insult to their *Panth* and made haste to have a discussion with him.

Yogi Bhangar Nath twitted him with mixing acid in a vessel full of milk. The milk had coagulated and on churning would not yield butter. He had doffed the garb of an ascetic and had again begun to live a worldly life. The Baba replied that the mother (guru) of Bhangar Nath was not an adept. She did not know how to cleanse the vessel (mind) thoroughly and by this mistake lost the butter. "You boast of giving up the life of a householder and becoming an ascetic but go to the homes of the householders to beg food. Without sharing with others what one earns, no merit is gained."

On hearing these words, the yogis began to utter fearful cries. Bedi Nanak in the Iron Age was refuting the teachings of the six schools of philo-

sophy. The Siddhas talked of medicinal roots and in a loud voice began to repeat their *mantras* and *tantras*. They assumed the forms of lions and tigers and showed their miraculous powers. Some grew wings and in sport began to fly in the skies like birds. Others became serpents and began to hiss and some more made fire to rain from the skies. Bhangar Nath made meteors run through space, and some sitting on their deer skins began to swim on the surface of water. The fire of anger in the minds of the Siddhas could not be quenched.

The Siddhas then addressed Nanak and said, "You showed miracles to the world. Show some to us. Why are you delaying?" The Baba replied, "Venerable Nath, I have nothing to show. I take shelter in nothing but the Word of the Guru and the congregation (of saints)." He added further, "O venerable Nath, listen to the Word and speak the truth. Without the True Name I have no other miracle to show. Even if I could clothe myself with fire and make my habitat in the snows of the Himalayas, eat iron and win the following of the whole world, increase my stature to such an extent as to make the earth move under its weight, wield so much power as to enable me to despatch to the other world whomsoever I wanted, without the true Name, all these powers are like the shadow of a cloud."

From the account given by Ibn Batuta and Bhai Gurdas, it is clear that the common people lived in awe of the yogis who, they thought, possessed supernatural powers. The Siddhas lived high up in the mountains in caves or thick forests and did not share the woes of the common people. They looked down upon them as ensnared in the nooses of worldly life, though, for the supply of their physical necessities, they depended on their gifts. The common folk administered to their wants in the hope of being blessed by them. The fear of their curses goaded them, even if they were unwilling to offer what they wanted. Guru Nanak taught that the lure of miraculous powers was a hindrance in the way of spiritual progress and practising truth and honesty in their daily activity men could get salvation without running to forests or caves.

Lately, Professor Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, after analysing the teachings of the scriptures of the Nath *sampradaya*, has given an authoritative account of their beliefs and practices and before contrasting them with the teachings of Guru Nanak, it will be useful to give a brief synopsis of them.

"The Siddhas considered their creed higher than the creeds of the six schools of philosophy and Jainism and Buddhism. The Vedantists, following hard reasonings are enveloped in their *Mayavad*, Bhatta Miman-sakas are entangled in their doctrine of 'fruit of actions.' The Vaisesikas have faced destruction on account of their belief of duality. Similarly, the followers of other schools are devoid of Reality. The Sankhyas, Vaisnavas, the followers of Vedas, Buddhists and Jains are wasting their time in making their bodies undergo various painful practices.

Again, learned Pandits engaged in *havans*, naked ascetics and poor seekers of merit by going to sacred places, groaning under the load of pain have not been able to find the Reality. Therefore it is proper to follow the *Siddha Marga* which follows the natural tendencies of mind. This *Siddha Marga* is the *Natha Mata*. Dividing the word *Natha* into 'Na' and 'tha' it has been made to mean the way that is the cause of the stability of the three *Lokas* from the very beginning. It is, therefore, that Shri Gorakh Nath has been called a *Natha*."⁵

Rahul Sankrityayana, an eminent scholar of ancient lore, after studying Buddhist literature found in Tibet and India had concluded that the Buddhist bhikshus of Vajrayana sect were the forerunners of the Nath Panth. They practised Yoga to increase their mental power, and along with it, to win the devotion of their followers, they practised various disciplines of *Hath Yoga* and several kinds of *tratakas*.⁶ With *tantras* and *mantras*, they invented many new gods and goddesses for the same purpose.⁷

The Siddhas themselves, however, trace their origin from Adi Nath (Shiva) who had two disciples—Machhindra Nath and Jalandhar Nath. Machhindra Nath was the Guru of Gorakh Nath, Charpat Nath, Reva Nath and Meen Nath. Jalandhar Nath's two famous disciples were Kanipa and Gopi Chand, whereas Gorakh had five, namely, Gehni Nath, Nag Nath, Bharthari Nath, Manik Nath and Bilashya Nath.

Gorakh Nath was the founder of the Split-eared sect of yogis. Jalandhar Nath founded the Kapalik sect and Machhindra Nath revealed the Kaul Gian and was the originator of Kaul Marg. From Guru Nanak's hymns, it is clear that he addressed them to the Split-eared yogis, whose symbols are named in them. A brief description of Kapalik and Kaul sects, however, will not be out of place.

The Kapaliks were so named because they ate and drank out of a cup made of the human skull. Also, their earrings were made of human bones. They generally lived in crematoriums and had a yogini with them for sexo-yogic ritual. Unfortunately, no books dealing with their creed and practices in detail are available, but what can be culled from the dramas like *Malati Madhava* and *Prabodhchandrodyā* about them can be expressed in these words:

A Kapalik, Som Siddhant by name, is made to say "that as Shiva plays with Uma daily at Kailas Mountain, the same sort of intercourse with a woman is the highest salvation. In the creed of these people, there is no pleasure except intercourse with a woman. When Sada Shiva is pleased, then no pain can spoil this pleasure. Therefore this pleasure is termed everlasting. From the *Prabodhchandrodyā* one learns that these Kapaliks offered oblations of human flesh with its fat and entrails and drank wine out of a cup of human skull and offered in worship to Maha Bhairava the fresh human blood and ever had a Kapali with them. Liquor was considered by them the means of cutting off all the

connection of the soul with the worldly life. A Kapalik in the *Karpur Manjari* is made to say that for a striver of Kaul Marg there is no necessity of a repetition of a *mantra* or *tantra*, no need of knowledge or meditation, even no necessity of a guru's grace. The Kapaliks drink liquor, have intercourse with women and easily get salvation."⁸

Professor Dwivedi remarks: "There is no doubt that the dramatist has painted the picture of the followers of this creed according to his own understanding of them and should be accepted with hesitation, but wherever there is a description of a Kapalik, he is described as a Shaiva yogi and consumer of liquor."

From an article of Bhadant Santi Bhikshu, published in No. 1, Vol IV of *Visva-Bharati Patrika*, Professor Dwivedi has given a quotation that shows that Kapaliks inherited these ideas from Buddhist Siddhas of Vajrayana sect. "For the striver who wishes to progress in practices of this Panth, it is absolutely necessary to control his mind. If the mind is disturbed on account of the non-fulfilment of the desires arising in it, then the whole attempt will be useless. For this reason, Anangvajra had laid down that we should tread the path in such a way as not to disturb the mind. If the jewel of mind is disturbed, then there will be no accomplishment. Then how to overcome this disturbance? If desires are suppressed and are not killed, they hide themselves lower down in the unconscious. When an occasion arises, they reappear and overwhelm the striver. Therefore it is not proper to suppress them. The right way is to fulfil all desires, then alone the mental disturbance will be over and true success will be obtained. In this way, the fulfilment of desires enters the practical life of the strivers. The background of this accomplishment was *Sunyavada*.⁹ The supreme aim of a striver is to achieve the state of void and rid his nature of all affections and hatreds. To fulfil desires, a woman is an absolute necessity. On account of this in *Vajrayana* five Buddhas and innumerable Bodhisattvas have been imagined accompanied by their Shaktis."

To achieve success, a guru is a must. It is for this reason that all the Buddhists who have become Siddhas have a guru. "As sweetness is the nature of jaggery, warmth is the nature of fire, in the same way the *dharma* of all *dharma*s and nature of all natures is non-existence. A Vajrasattva is the image of non-existence. Vajrasattva, Vajradhara, Vajrapani and Tathagata are the names of this void. These very Vajradhars are the gurus of all the Buddhas."

Machhindra Nath was the originator of the *Kaul Gian* (*kaulajnana*) sect of the Siddhas in this age, otherwise this sect claims its existence since the world began. It appears the followers of this sect did not want to disclose who they were. A believer of this creed "should be a 'Shakta' inwardly, outwardly he should pose as a Saiva and should conduct himself as a Vaishnava in his dealings with others. This is the code of conduct."¹⁰

From the philosophic point of view, they believe the doctrine of *Satkarya*; whatever never was can never be. Cause is the name of effect in its unmanifested state and effect is the name of cause in the state of manifestation.¹¹ When Siva desires to create, His wish takes the form of Sakti. This Sakti is called Tripura and is the author of creation. The Tantrikas believe that though Parabrahman always exists, He cannot do anything without this Sakti. This Sakti (power) of itself comes out of Parabrahman and of itself manages the work of creation. Because Sakti is the desire of creating the world and because Parabrahman is conscious, this Sakti that comes out of it is conscious also. The thinkers of this sect believe in thirty-six substances, twenty-five of which are identical with those of the Samkhya.

For the fulfilment of the object of their life, this sect believes that yoga and *bhoga* go together. They freely indulge in drinking, eating fish and meat, and in sexual intercourse in its several poses. "Those who have acquired 'Advait Gian,'¹² should have no hesitation to indulge in the objects of their senses. They should behave in the same way with all the *Varnas* and should observe no distinction in what is eatable and what is not eatable. In every act, they should think that 'neither am I anybody nor anything is mine, no one is bound nor is there any bondage, nor am I doing anything.'"¹³

Guru Nanak, it appears, got acquainted with the practices of this sect following his visits to Kamrup and Kashmir. In a hymn, in *Ramkali*, he has addressed the originator of this sect as under:

Hear O Machhindra, Nanak speaks:

One should bring the five¹⁴ under control and never waver. In this way, he should nourish his yoga and save himself and all his forbears. He is an *Avdhut*, who follows this teaching, and day and night remains concentrated in Brahman. He begs for the alms of loving devotion and fear of God, and with invaluable contentment remains ever satisfied. His sitting pose is to become an image of meditation. He is to concentrate his mind on the True Name. Nanak utters everlasting teaching, hear, O Machhindra, the characteristics of an *Avdhu*. He who roams desireless amidst desires, will certainly know the Creator. Nanak declares this *Agama* that having faith in the Guru he should become one with him. He who eats the food and drink of Guru's instruction will know the secret of all the six schools of philosophy.¹⁵

Gorakh Nath, on the other hand, was a strict believer in perfect continence and denounced women. He called a woman a tigress, "who destroys our sleep, deprives us of our vital fluid (semen) and thus weakens our bodies. The tigress is in continual search of beautiful men whom she eats up, says Gorakh Nath."¹⁶

Though Gorakh was very strict on this point, yet somehow *Vajrayana* and *Sahajayana* practices have entered into his *panth* also. In *Gorakh Padhati*, published by Mani Dhar Sharma, Vajroli and Sahajoli *mudras*

are mentioned. Surely, they are remanents of Vajrayani and Sahajayani practices. A yogi who practises Vajroli *mudra* becomes a siddha without observing any rules of yoga and behaving according to his own wishes. In practising this *mudra*, two things are a necessity, though they are not easily available to all men. They are a woman obedient to one's wishes and pure milk. Just as a woman is necessary for the success of a male yogi, a man is necessary for the success of a female yogi. This holy yoga, in spite of its happy indulgence in *bhoga*, is the bestower of salvation.¹⁷ The Brahmins, too, considered women to be Sudras. They could not wear the sacred thread and were not initiated into the study of sacred scriptures. Guru Nanak protested against this attitude of yogis and Brahmin priests. Says he in *Asa di Var*:

Man is conceived in the womb of a woman, born of her and is betrothed and married to her. Through a woman new relationships are contracted and the woman continues the race. When one woman dies, another is sought after. She binds together a household. Why call her low, who gives birth to great men. A woman is born of a woman, none was born but through her. God alone is independent of a woman, says Nanak. The mouth that always utters His praises is fortunate and beautiful. That face will shine in the Court of the True One, says Nanak. All own Him as their own, sort out those who are not His. All will have to account for the actions they perform. When we are not to stay in this world (for ever) why to strut in pride. Let us because of our learning not call anyone low. We need not quarrel with a fool.¹⁸

According to Siddha cosmogony, Para Siva or Swayaish is the Supreme Reality. When He wishes to create the world, Shakti comes out of Him and he himself passes through five stages of *Apar*, *Para*, *Sunya*, *Niranjana* and *Parmatman*. Shakti also passes through the five stages of *Nija*, *Para*, *Apara*, *Suksma* and *Kundli*. Then begins the creation of 25 categories mentioned by Samkhyas, Purusa and 24 categories of Prakrti. They are *Manas* or *Buddhi* and *Ahamkara* in succession. From *Ahamkara* under the influence of *Sattva*, *Manas* comes into existence; under the influence of *Rajas*, the five senses of action and the five senses of knowledge develop and under the influence of *Tamas*, the five *Tanmatras*, i.e. sound, tongue, colour, taste and smell come to exist and then come the five gross elements, i.e. ether, air, fire, water and earth. *Purusa* or *Jiva*, according to the Siddha scriptures is the Supreme Reality itself under the influence of ignorance created by Shakti. But Shakti unlike Prakrti or Maya is a conscious entity. Thus the Siddhas believe in 36 categories.¹⁹

Guru Nanak laid stress on two things in his discourses with the Siddhas. One was that the Siddhas, instead of withdrawing to high mountain caves and thick forests, should live amongst the common folk and give them right guidance, so that tyranny of the rulers which they

were undergoing could be removed. Second, they should not condemn householders who provided the wherewithal to support their physical life. We shall see from the hymns addressed to them that he wanted to cure them of the craze for miraculous powers and long life. He dissuaded them from the use of intoxicants as a help to concentration.

Gorakh and Guru Nanak both emphasized the need of a true guru, says Gorakh Nath. "Be firm in having a guru, do not remain without a guru. None can obtain gnosis without a guru, O brother!"²⁰

Guru Nanak in his *Asa di Var* expresses it in this way:

None found the way without the True Guru and none will find it.

God Himself has placed this truth in the True Guru and he has proclaimed it openly.

Those who get rid of *moha* (attachment to things of the world) on meeting the True Guru get everlasting salvation.

The best thought is to devote one's mind to the True God.

They find the Benevolent Reality, the life of the Universe.²¹

The Lord God is a beautiful mansion, full of jewels, rubies, pearls and genuine diamonds, a fort of gold that delights the heart.

How to climb up the fort without a ladder? You can have a view of it through the Guru with his mind intent on Hari.

The Guru is the ladder, the Guru is the boat and the raft laden with the name of Hari. He is the ship to cross the flowing river.

When it pleases Him, the soul goes to bathe in the pool of truth and becomes pure.²²

Both of them agree in preaching that the Word is the Guru and the mind concentrated on its vibrations is the disciple.

In the *Machhindra-Gorakh Bodh*, para 13, Gorakh puts the questions:

O Swami what is the root, what is the time ?

Who is the Guru, who is the disciple ?

Where is the field, how is union attained ?

Which is the reality grasping which one becomes detached ?

Machhindra's answer is given in para 14:

O *Avdhu*, mind is the root, time is as long as the breath lasts,

Word is the Guru and the attentive mind is the disciple,

Trikuti (the point between the two eyebrows) is the field,

Reversing the breath one gets united,

Grasping the indescribable Reality one remains detached.

In the *Siddhu Goshti* the yogi asks:

What is the root, of what creed is the time now ?

Who is thy guru, of whom thou art a disciple ?

Reflecting on what narrative, dost thou remain detached ?

The Guru answers:

Nanak speaks: hear, O yogi !
 From breath (life) starts,
 Now the time is of the creed of the True Guru.
 The Word is the Guru, keeping attention
 Glued to its vibrations one becomes its disciple.
 Reflecting on the narrative of the Ineffable, I remain detached,
 Nanak, the Sustainer of the earth is the Guru through all ages.²³

Like Guru Nanak, Gorakh, too, condemned the mere wearing of outer symbols and emphasized self-control. When the mind is controlled, success is achieved.

O Avdhu: When the mind is pure, then water in the wooden bowl becomes the water of the Ganges. When the mind which is in the bondage of illusion (*maya*) is controlled, the whole world becomes thy disciple, says Gorakh. Those who reflect on the formless become the image of Truth.²⁴

Walking with wooden sandals on, the foot slips and wearing irons round the waist weakens the body. He who goes naked, remains silent or lives on milk alone will not achieve success in yoga by these means. He who lives on milk always thinks of homes (from which he gets milk). He who goes naked always thinks of fuel. He who remains silent has his hopes fixed on his friend (through whom he communicates with others). By merely wearing a patched coat and without a guru one is not confirmed in faith.²⁵

In a *Ramkali Astpadi*, Guru Nanak has expressed his views on the same theme as follows:

"They preach renunciation to the world, but establish their own *maths*. Leaving their own abodes, how will they find the truth. Attached to mineness they love women. They are neither Avdhuts nor householders. O Yogi ! stick to thy seat to remove the misery of thy doubt. Art thou not ashamed of begging from door to door? Thou singest hymns but dost not know thyself. How can thy suffering be over? If thou, with love in thy heart, takest to the Guru's word, instead of alms obtained by begging, thou will get the food of highest thoughts. Those who rub ashes and practise fraud will have to undergo the punishment of Yama for their attachment to *maya*. In the broken bowl (i.e. disturbed heart), the gift of love would not stay. Bound by the ties of *karma* thou wilt come and go. They call themselves celibates, but do not practise continence. When begging, they call women mothers, but cast lustful eyes on them. Cruel, they have not been illuminated by the Divine Light. They are sunk from head to foot in worldly desires. They wear a patched coat as the robe of their order. Like an actor they are playing their assumed parts. The fire of anxiety is scorching their minds. How can they go across without righteous deeds. They wear crystal rings in their

ears, but one cannot get salvation without real knowledge. Their tongues covet tasty foods. They have become beasts and cannot erase that stigma. All men are under the sway of three qualities and the yogis, too. Sorrow will be over by reflecting on the Word. He who becomes pure through the True Word knows the real way to yog. Thou possessest all the nine treasures. Thou hast power to create and destroy. Whatever thou wishest will happen. When Truth fills the heart, celibacy, charity and self-control result. Nanak, such a yogi is the friend of all the three worlds."²⁶

Gorakh Nath, like Guru Nanak, was against idol-worship.

I am a sacrifice to Thee, O unsculptured God !
 All serve chiselled images,
 They do not find His secret.
 Thou art immortal and are known to be primeval,
 I have put my faith in Thee,
 None hath fashioned Thee.
 Ten incarnations are said to be Thine,
 But they were not God.
 They got the reward of their own actions.
 The Creator is different from them.
 Thou art the Brahman the Perfect Purusa.
 All forms on earth are Thy images.
 I have not heard with my ears or seen with my eyes
 The person who created Thee.
 Thou Thyself camest out of Thyself,
 Seeing Thee one gets light.
 Says Gorakh, Thou alone coinest the word of the Guru.²⁷

Guru Nanak's *Bani* also describes Him as self-created:

He Himself created Himself,
 And He Himself created the Name.²⁸

* * *

He cannot be installed, nor created by anyone,
 He, the Immaculate One, is self-existent.²⁹

* * *

Know the True One to be the everlasting creator and sustainer. He created Himself and is eternal, ungraspable by the intellect and is infinite.³⁰

Guru Nanak forbade idol-worship: "He hath in his home the image of Narayana with all his courtiers. He worshippeth it and keepeth it washed. He offereth saffron, sandal, and flowers to it and falleth at its feet again and again to propitiate it. But he beggeth his food and raiment from men. The blind man is being punished for his blind deeds. The idol neither giveth food to the hungry nor can protect them from death. The blind crowd is engaged in a blind contention."³¹

Both Guru Nanak and Gorakh Nath admitted Hindus of all castes to their folds. Nay, their doors were open even to Muslims.

As has been stated above, in spite of the teachings of Gorakh to the contrary, the yogi in times of Guru Nanak drank liquor for concentration. In his *pauri* 164, Gorakh says:

If a yogi indulges in calumny of others,
Drinks wine or *bhang* and eats meat,
One hundred and one forbears of his will go to hell.
Gorakh Rai truly declares this truth.

In a hymn addressed to Bharthari, Guru Nanak says: "Take the molasses of knowledge, *dhava* flowers of meditation and the *kikar* bark³² of good deeds. Light a furnace in the *dasam duar*, plaster it with love and then distil nectar. My mind drinketh the relishing Name and becoming intoxicated is enjoying the state of *Sahj*. Day and night this state endureth and keeping the love of God constantly in my heart, I cling to the indestructible Word. This cup of *Sahj* filled with unadulterated truth is given to him on whom He showereth grace. He who tradeth in nectar, how can he have a taste for this despicable wine? Drinking the nectar of testified words of the Guru, I became acceptable to him. What hath he who longeth for his vision to do with salvation or paradise. Constantly singing His praises, he is ever detached and loseth not his life in gambling. Saith Nanak, listen, O Yogi Bharthari, he who is drinking the constant flow of nectar is ever inebriated."³³

But Gorakh preached the renunciation of worldly activity, whereas Guru Nanak was against it.

Says Gorakh:

If a householder discourses on knowledge,
If a man taking intoxicating drugs engages in meditation,
If an ascetic nourishes desire,
All three are tied in a tight noose, says Nath.³⁴

Guru Nanak was against giving up of worldly activity. He taught that everybody should work for his bodily needs and share his earnings with others. The yogis wandered from place to place singing songs of knowledge, but they themselves remained ignorant; says Guru Nanak:

Without knowledge himself he sings songs (praising knowledge).
A starving *mullah* turns his house into a mosque;
Unable to earn a living he has his ears split;
He becomes a mendicant and loses self-respect.
Do not fall at the feet of him,
Who calling himself a *guru* or *pir* goes abegging.
Those who earn their living by the sweat of
Their brow and give a portion in charity,
Know the right path, O Nanak.³⁵

That Hatha yogis had left the path pointed out by Gorakh Nath and used the *hatha* practices as a means of physical culture to prolong life has been noted by Swami Vivekananda also on page 15 of his translation of Patanjali's aphorisms in English, called *Raja Yoga*.

This portion of yoga is a little similar to the *Hath Yoga* which deals entirely with the physical body, its aim being to make the physical body very strong. We have nothing to do with it here, because its practices are very difficult and cannot be learnt in a day, and after all, they do not lead to spiritual growth. Many of these practices you will find in Delsarte and other teachers, such as placing the body in different postures. The object in these is physical not psychological. There is not one muscle in the body over which a man cannot establish perfect control; the heart can be stopped or made to go on at his bidding, and each part of the organism can be similarly controlled.

The result of this part of yoga is to make men live long; health is the chief idea, the one goal of the *Hath Yogi*. He is determined not to fall sick, and he never does. He lives long; a hundred years is nothing to him; he is quite young and fresh even when he is 150, without one hair having turned grey. But that is all. A banyan tree lives sometimes 5,000 years, but it is a banyan-tree, and nothing more. So if a man lives long, he is only a healthy animal.³⁶

Guru Nanak, too, was against this lengthening of life and passing it without achieving the real aim of life.

If a man were to live for four *yugas* —
 Nay even ten times more,
 Were he to become famous throughout the nine continents
 And have all men as his followers,
 Winning a good name: if he were to have esteem
 And praise of the whole world,
 None would call for him
 If he were devoid of His grace.³⁷

We shall end this paper by giving extracts from *Siddha-Goshti* (a dialogue between Guru Nanak and the Siddhas), which portray the difference between his views and those of the Hatha Yogis (of the Split-eared sect) on important topics of religion and religious life.

A Dialogue Between Guru Nanak and the Siddhas

Q. Who are you, what is your name, what is your creed, what is your purpose in (coming here)? Tell the truth, we pray, we are a sacrifice unto the saints. Where is your seat, where do you live, O boy? Whence have you come, where will you go, what is your way?³⁸

A. Hear, O *Vairagi*, I abide constantly in Him, who pervades all hearts, and in the love of the True Guru I walk. By His command

I have come. I always follow His will. In due course, I have come here. In everlasting God I abide and sit ; this I have obtained through the Guru's instruction. He who understands the Guru's Word, knows his self and then merges in the Truth of all Truths.

Charpat asks: The ocean of the world is deep and impassable, how to get across it, O Nanak ! Give me your true thoughts about it.³⁹

Nanak answers: Him, who himself questions and himself knows what answer can be given. Speak the truth, do you not consider yourself having crossed it, why enter into discussion then? Just as the lotus flower and the duck swimming in a river remain unaffected by water, so by keeping your attention fixed on the Word and repeating the Name this ocean of fear is crossed. With their thoughts fixed on one God, they live as if in a secluded place ; amidst a sea of desires they remain desireless. Of him who has realized the unfathomable and unknowable and makes others realize the Supreme Reality, Nanak is a slave.⁴⁰

Yogi: Away from markets and thoroughfares we live in the shrubs and the trees of forests and eat roots and fruits for food. An Avdhut should always discourse on gnosis. Bathing in the sacred places, peace is obtained and no dirt remains attached to the mind. Loharipa, the disciple of Gorakh says, this is the way to Yoga.⁴¹

Nanak: In markets and thoroughfares, a man should remain alert and not let his mind run after others' women. Without the support of the Name, the mind finds no rest, nor its hunger (for worldly goods) is appeased. The Guru has shown me the shop, the city and the home, where I peacefully trade in Truth. My sleep (of negligence) is broken and I eat little, and reflect on Reality.⁴²

Yogi: Put on the garb of the school of *Yogeshawaras*, in the shape of earrings, a wallet and a patched coat. Of the twelve sects adopt the one (*Ai Panth*). Of the six schools take to this path. Instruct your mind in this way, O man, and you will not come in the womb again.⁴³

Nanak: The God-orientated will understand that this is how the way to Yoga is found. Wear the earrings of keeping your mind constantly fixed on the Word and, thus, destroy your egoism and mineness. Get rid of lust, anger and pride, this is made plain by the Guru's word. Let the thought that God pervades all be your patched coat and wallet ; thus says Nanak the One God will save you. The Lord is True, His glory is everlasting. He testifies to this teaching of the Guru to be pure. Let the heart turned away from sensual pleasures be your bowl and the adoption of the qualities of the five elements be your cap. Let your body be the prayer-carpet of deer-skin and the disciplined mind the ropes round your loins and with charity, contentment and self-control, cherish the Name through the Guru, O Nanak.⁴⁴

Q. Who is concealed, who is liberated, who is united within and without? Who comes and who goes? Who pervades all the three worlds?⁴⁵

A. God is concealed in every vessel (body). The God-orientated is liberated; he is united within and without through the Word. The self-orientated dies and comes and goes again and again. The God-orientated merges in Truth, O Nanak.⁴⁶

Q. How is (the soul) bound and eaten up by the serpent (*maya*)? How is it lost; how is it regained? How does it become pure? How does it wander in darkness? He who discloses these facts is our Guru.⁴⁷

A. (The soul) is bound by its evil inclinations and the serpent (*maya*) eats it up. The self-orientated has lost, the God-orientated has gained. The darkness is removed on meeting the True Guru. Nanak! he who obliterates his ego merges in God. Keep the mind constantly in the state of thoughtlessness. The swan (soul) will not fly nor will the body fall. If one knows that his true home is the cave of equipoise, then Nanak, the Lord is pleased and he merges in the True One.⁴⁸

Q. Why did you leave your home, O Udasi? Why did you don this garb? What merchandise do you trade in? How will you take across your followers?⁴⁹

A. I became an Udasi to seek the God-orientated. To have a vision of God, I have donned this garb. I trade in the merchandise of truth. Nanak! through the Guru a man will get across.⁵⁰

Q. How have you changed your life? For what purpose have you attuned your mind? How have you destroyed your desire and expectations? How have you found the constant Light? How can one chew iron without teeth. Nanak, give a true answer to all these questions?⁵¹

A. Being reborn to the True Guru my wanderings are over. By being imbued with the Everlasting, this mind was stabilized. Through the Word I burnt my desires and expectations. Through the Guru I found the constant Light. Iron can be chewed by warding off the influence of the three *gunas*. Says Nanak the Emancipator (God) then emancipates one.⁵²

Q. How did life begin? Of what creed is thy sway? Who is your Guru? Whose disciple are you? What gospel keeps you detached? Expound to us the gospel, how through the Word is one ferried across?⁵³

A. Listen to it now, O Yogi. From air life begins. The creed of the True Guru has its sway now. The Word is my Guru. By keeping my attention glued to its vibrations I am its disciple. By attaching myself to the story of the Indescribable I remain detached. Nanak! the sustainer of the universe, the Guru, exists through all the *Yugas*. He who reflects on the gospel of the Word, gets rid of the fire of egoism through the Guru.⁵⁴

Q. How can one chew iron with the teeth of a fish? With what food will one get rid of pride? A house of snow is enveloped by a covering of fire, which is the cave where one can stay undisturbed? Whom should one consider pervading here and hereafter, so as to merge in

Him. Concentrating on what does the mind get absorbed in itself?⁵⁵

A. One should destroy all egoistic tendencies and destroying otherness merge in the One. The world is hard for an ignorant self-orientated man. By practising the Word one can chew this iron. When one realizes One (God) within and without, Nanak! by the Guru's will the fire is extinguished. Imbued with the fear of the True One, one should destroy one's pride. By reflecting on the Word, he should realize the existence of one God all around. When the True Word abides in the heart, all disturbance in the body and the mind is destroyed and he is dyed in the love of God. The poisonous fires of lust and wrath are stilled by the grace of the loving God.⁵⁶

Q. How does the moon (of peace) cool the mind like snow? How does the sun (of wisdom) blaze in its splendour? How can one ward off the effects of time? What wisdom will secure honour to the God-orientated? Who is the warrior who destroys death?⁵⁷

A. By uttering the Word, the moon (of peace) shines with infinite light. When in the state of peace, the sun of knowledge dawns, darkness is removed. Regard pleasure and pain alike, with Name as your prop. Then God Himself will ferry you across. Through the Guru's instruction, the mind will merge in truth. Then, says Nanak, death will not consume you.⁵⁸

Q. All talk of the state of thoughtlessness. But how can one get to this state for ever? What are they like who are enraptured with this state?

A. They are like Him, from whom they have emanated. Neither are they born, nor do they die, neither do they come nor do they go, who, Nanak! through the Guru have instructed their minds. Having thoroughly closed the nine apertures, one should fully enter the tenth door. There strains of unstruck music are heard. (Those who go there) are enraptured with the True One, seeing Him face to face. The True One fills all hearts. The secret teaching becomes manifest and, Nanak! one can test the truth of it.⁵⁹

Q. Where is the abode of the Word, through which one swims across the sea of *samsara*? What supports the breath that goes out up to ten fingers. How can the inner being that speaks and sports be controlled to realize the unknowable.

A. Listen, O Swami, Nanak utters the truth how he instructed his own mind. Through the Guru's Word one's attention is fixed on God and He through His grace unites him with Himself. God Himself is wise. He is far-seeing, and one merges in Him through perfectly good fortune. The ungraspable Word pervades all beings, wherever I cast my eyes I see it. Air resides in the Supreme Being, who is attributeless but has all powers. When he casts His look of grace on one, the Word fills the heart and all doubts are removed. When the Name abides in the heart, the mind and the body become pure and the speech, too.

Through the Word of the Guru, one swims across the ocean of *samsara* and one realizes the One here and hereafter. The Word reveals Him who has no distinguishing marks, colour or shade of *maya* (illusion). Nanak! the True God is the support of the breath that goes out up to ten fingers. When the God-orientated speaks, he churns the Reality, for he knows the Ungraspable and Infinite God. When one wards off the effect of the three modes and enshrines the Word in one's heart, egoism from one's mind vanishes. When one knows that one God is within and without, the love of the Name of God is enshrined in his heart. When God makes one know, one understands the real meaning of *Ida*, *Pingala* and *Sukhmana*. For the True God is above the three channels of breath and he is merged in Him through the Word of the Guru.⁶⁰

Q. Air is said to be the life of mind, what essence does air eat? What is the distinguishing mark of knowledge? What is the practice of a Siddha, O Avdhut?

A. Without the Word, one gets not the essence. O Avdhut, and the thirst of egoism is not quenched. Those imbued with the Word taste nectar and get satisfaction in God.

Q. What wisdom will stabilize the mind? What food will satiate it?

A. From the True Guru one learns how to treat pleasure and pain alike and be not overwhelmed by death.⁶¹

Q. When there was no heart or body, where did the mind abide? When the lotus of the navel did not hold the breath, where did air reside? When there was no form or line, to what did one attach oneself through the Word? When there was no sepulchre of ovum and spermatozoa, the Supreme Being could not be evaluated. How can one know God, who has no colour, garb or form?⁶²

A. Those imbued with the Name realized the Truth of all Truths then as they do now. When there was no heart or body, O Avdhut, then the detached mind abode in God. When there was no lotus of navel to hold it, then air abode in itself, without any attachment. When there was no form, line or species, then the True Word was with God; when there was no motion, skies or time, the light of the Formless One pervaded all the three worlds. All colours, garbs and forms were in one God and the wonderful Word alone was then. Without Truth none is pure, O Nanak! but this story is too great for words.⁶³

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Abbreviation S—*Sloka* Ast—*Astpadi* P—*Paudi*

All references from the *Guru Granth* are from *Guru Nanak's Bani* only.

1. *Asa* 4.3.34 and 4.4.38, *Asa Ast. Ghara* 2, 8; 1.
2. *Var Ramkali*, 5.2.7, p. 12.
3. The Siddhas living in mountain caves higher up considered themselves superior to those Indians living in the plains.

4. Rasdharis are folk-dramatists of the Punjab who go from place to place and entertain people with open-air dances and presenting scenes generally from the lives of Lord Krishna and Ram Chandra.
5. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, *Nath Sampradaya*, p. 3.
6. *Tratakas* — looking at a minute object without working the eyelids with the mind concentrated till tears run down the eyes.
7. Rangeya Raghava, *Gorakhnath Aur Unka Yug*, p. 3.
8. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, *Nath Sampradaya*, pp. 96, 97.
9. *Sunyavad* — The doctrine of "emptiness" of a sect of the Buddhists.
10. *Nath Sampradaya*, p. 61.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Advaita Gian* — The doctrine that the *jiva* (the individual soul) and Brahman are one.
13. *Nath Sampradaya*, p. 78.
14. The fires are lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride.
15. *Ramkali*, 4.5.
16. Pitamber Barthwal, *Gorakh Vani*, p. 43.
17. *Nath Sampradaya*, p. 74.
18. *Var Asa*, S. 2, p. 19.
19. *Nath Sampradaya*, p. 115.
20. *Gorakh Vani*, p. 128.
21. *Var Asa*, p. 6.
22. *Suhi*, 3.9.
23. *Siddha Goshti*, p. 43 and 44.
24. *Gorakh Vani*, pada 153.
25. *Ibid.*, padas 31 and 32.
26. *Ramkali Ast.*, 2.
27. *Gorakh Vani*, pada 58.
28. *Var Asa*, p. 1.
29. *Japji*, p. 5.
30. *Wadhans*, 1.3.1.
31. *Var Sarang*, S. 1, p. 9.
32. Molasses, *dhava* flowers and the bark of *kikar* are the ingredients from which wine is distilled.
33. *Asa*, 4.4. 38.
34. *Gorakh Vani*, pada 246.
35. *Var Sarang*, S. 1, p. 21.
36. Swami Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga*, p. 15.
37. *Japji*, p. 7.
38. *Siddha Goshti*, Ramkali, p. 2.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 4 and 5.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 10 and 11.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 15 and 16.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

53. Ibid., p. 43.
 54. Ibid., p. 44.
 55. Ibid., p. 45.
 56. Ibid., p. 46 and 47.
 57. Ibid., p. 48.
 58. Ibid., p. 49.
 59. Ibid., p. 52 and 53.
 60. Ibid., p. 58, 59 and 60.
 61. Ibid., p. 61.
 62. Ibid., p. 66.
 63. Ibid., p. 67.
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BUDDHISM AND SIKHISM

L. M. JOSHI

A detailed study of Sikhism with special reference to Buddhism has yet to be attempted. The one outstanding difference between these two faiths is that the former is a theistic system, whereas the latter is a non-theistic one. In other matters, Sikhism is nearer to Buddhism than to any other religious tradition. We shall point out here some manifest similarities between these two systems.¹

Sikhism, like Buddhism, is of non-Vedic or non-Brahmanical origin. Like the Buddha, Guru Nanak also rejected the authority of the Vedic *sruti*. Both Buddhism and Sikhism trace their origins to historical and human teachers, the Buddha (624-544 B.C.) and Guru Nanak (A.D. 1469-1539) respectively. Traditions agree that both these teachers were born in Ksatriya families and in *Vaisakha* (May). Buddhist legends concerning the birth and youth of Siddhartha Gautama find their parallels in the myths developed around the birth and early career of the young Nanak. It will be an interesting study to compare the biographical details of Gautama given in the *Jataka-Nidanakatha*, the *Mahavastu-avadana*, the *Lalitavistarasutra* and the *Buddhacarita* with those of Nanak preserved in such works as the *Puratan Janamsakhi*, *Janumsakhi Meharban*, *Gian Ratnavali*, etc.

Astrologer Hardyal's prophecy regarding the future career of the child Nanak is curiously similar to that of *risi* Asita regarding the child Siddhartha. Guru Nanak, like Sakyamuni, was a great traveller and taught while wandering from place to place. His extensive travels and dialogues with numerous leaders and votaries of other faiths during the course of his journey are reminiscent of Siddhartha's going forth from household life to the life of a mendicant monk in search of the solutions of the ills of life. Both the founders of Sikhism and Buddhism taught their doctrines in the languages of the masses. The Buddha adopted the languages commonly spoken by the peoples of Magadha and Kosala. He wanted to broadcast his teachings among all sections of the society. Hence we find in his discourses popular idioms and simple metaphors drawn from everyday life. His indifferent attitude towards barren metaphysical theories was matched by his insistence on the practical

path leading to freedom from miseries. These things were characteristic of Guru Nanak also who adopted the old Punjabi dialect as the medium of his teaching and literary composition. As Macauliffe has said, "The Sikh Gurus were simple men who generally chose colloquial language for the expression of their ideas and avoided learned words and metaphysical subtleties."²

The word *sikh* corresponds to the Pali word *sekha* (Sanskrit *sisya*, *saiksha*) which means one under training, a disciple or pupil. The Mahayana Buddhists described old Buddhism as *Sravakayana*, 'Vehicle of disciples' or the 'way of pupils.' The Buddhists are the followers (*savakas*, *sravakas*) of Buddhas. From this point of view, the Sikhs are the followers or pupils of the Teachers (Gurus), and Sikhism may also be called *Sravakayana*. The Buddha is called a *sasta*, i.e., guru, teacher. His teaching and discipline are called *sasana* which in Sikhism is called *gurumati*. The important position occupied by the 'spiritual friend' (*kalyanamitra*) or teacher in Buddhism has its parallel in Sikhism. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the best teachers in Buddhism, whereas Sikhism reveres the memory of ten historical Teachers from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. Each Sikh, however, needs the guidance of a personal teacher in the path of devotional mysticism. It is an acknowledged tenet of Sikhism that the highest goal can be achieved only with the grace of the Guru. Here the Guru becomes a divine agency and, indeed, Guru Nanak has said that "without a Guru there can be no divine knowledge."³ In Mahayana Buddhism, the teacher is considered to be 'wisdom embodied' (*Jnanakaya*) and the sole refuge of the pupil. He is revered even as a supreme divinity without whose kind offices one cannot cross the flood that is *samsara*.⁴

A distinct attitude of reverence for sacred scriptures is another common point between Buddhism and Sikhism. The Buddhist reverence for *Buddhavacana* is matched by the Sikh reverence for *Gurubani*. The hymns and songs of the Gurus have the same sanctity and authority for the Sikhs as the Buddha's discourses for the Buddhists. The Buddha's teaching (*dharma*) is identified with the Buddha. "One who sees the *dharma* sees the Buddha." Since the demise of the Master, his teaching has been the guide of the Buddhists. Likewise, after the last Guru, the teachings of the Gurus have been revered as their embodiment.

Guru Nanak, like Gautama Buddha, rejected the Brahmanical scheme of *varnasrama-dharma* and taught the equality of man and woman in socio-religious life. It is the nobility of the heart and the purity of the deeds that distinguish men and women in society : women should have the same freedom of faith as the men. "No one is high or low (*Nanak, uttam nicu na koi*)."⁵ It is the deeds of a person, and not his birth or caste, that determine his position here or hereafter.⁶ The Buddha had criticized the theory of the divine origin of four castes and ridiculed the priestly claims to superiority. According to Buddhism also,

it is the deeds of a person that determine his or her life. "Not by birth does one become an outcast, nor by birth does one become a Brahmin, by deeds one becomes a Brahmin, by deeds one becomes an outcast."⁷ A virtuous and holy man is acknowledged a Brahmin in Buddhism as well as in Sikhism. The Buddha says: "One who is free from wrath is devout, virtuous, undefiled, self-controlled and living in his last body, him I call a Brahmin."⁸ According to Guru Nanak, "He is a Brahmin who concentrates on God (*brahman*). He obtains liberation for himself and for the entire clan."⁹

The doctrine of *karman* or moral retribution is a fundamental tenet of Buddhism and of Sikhism. What Guru Nanak calls *hukam* or the divine will, regulating the universe and controlling its creatures, is simply the *karman* in Buddhism. This causal law of *karman*, according to Buddhism, functions ceaselessly and independently of any other agency, and there is no escape from it except when one enters *Nirvana*. All beings are tied up to their *karman*; it is their *karman* that goes with the beings beyond death and fashions their rebirth. The cause of the inequality of beings in this world is rooted in their deeds. Guru Nanak also recognizes that the acts of creatures determine their condition. "The bird or man, by his ideas and his acts, sometimes flieth high and sometimes low," that is to say, beings are exalted or debased according to their thoughts and deeds.¹⁰ The Buddha has said that "All beings have *karman* as their portion; they are heirs to their *karman*; they are sprung from their *karman*; their *karman* is their kinsman; their *karman* is their refuge; *karman* allots beings to meanness or greatness."¹¹ The Buddhist institution of *Samgha* has its counterpart in the Sikh institution of *Sangat*. The practice of a community-kitchen (*langar*) is comparable with the Buddhist monastic practice of common meals in the *viharas*. According to Bhai Jodh Singh, "Absolute faith in the Guru is the first requisite of Sikhism."¹² The bedrock of Buddhism is the faith in the Buddha and his teachings. Faith (*sraddha*) is called "the best treasure of man, "by faith the flood is crossed over;" just as the Buddhists take refuge in the trinity, the Buddha, the Dharma and the *Samgha*, so the Sikhs take refuge in the *Guru*, the *Bani* and the *Sangat*—Sikh triad.

It is in the domain of practical ethics that Buddhism and Sikhism come very close to each other. The purity of intention and uprightness of conduct are held to be of cardinal importance for leading a moral life. Self-restraint, self-introspection, mind-control, charity, kindness, contentment, steadfastness, etc., are one's duties. They are the virtues praised and recommended by both the religions. The famous saying in the *Gauri Sukhmani*: "Without contentment none gets satisfaction" is comparable with the saying in the *Dhammapada*: "Contentment is the supreme wealth." The Third Guru's saying: "Search yourself, O brother," is comparable with Buddha's admonition: "Seek your

own self." The Fifth Guru says, "Of all renunciations, the best is the renunciation of lust, anger and greed."¹³ The Buddha has repeatedly taught that "One should conquer anger by love, evil by good, greed by liberality, and falsehood by truth."¹⁴ As in Buddhism so in Sikhism, the greatest emphasis is laid upon the control of the mind. Both the Buddha and Guru Nanak have said in almost similar words that "by conquering the mind everything is conquered." Four *pauris* (stanzas) of the *Japuji* are devoted to the subject of mind-control. The importance of meditation in Buddhism can hardly be exaggerated. Guru Nanak is quite at one with the Buddha when he says that "meditation alone is the door to freedom." The Buddha has taught that "He whose mind is stilled, sees and knows what truly is." There are many points on which Buddhism and Sikhism make a common bridge of understanding. It is hoped that someone will take up the task in the future and make a fuller study of the subject.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For some suggestions and observations on this subject, see L. M. Joshi "Buddhism and Early Sikhism" in *Guru Nanak, His Life and Teachings*, ed. by Gurmukh Nihal Singh, Guru Nanak Foundation, New Delhi, 1969; *ibid.* "Buddhist Tradition and Guru Nanak," *Maha Bodhi Journal*, Vol. 77, Vesakh Issue, Calcutta, 1969, p. 146 ff.
2. M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, Preface, p. xx.
3. cf. Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, I, p. 234; Bhai Jodh Singh, *Lectures on Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 53.
4. cf. L.M. Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India*, pp. 360-362 and notes.
5. *Japji*, 33.
6. cf. Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 11.
7. *Suttanipata, Vasalasutta*.
8. *Dhammapada*, verse 400.
9. Dhanasari, Sabad 7; *Nanak Vani*, ed. by Jay Ram Mishra, p. 18.
10. Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 289; *Nanak Vani*, p. 825.
11. H.C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translation*, HOS (1922), pp. 215, 228; *Anguttara Nikaya*, Vol. III, p. 210; *Sri Rag, Asatpadian*, Mohalla I.
12. *Lectures on Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 52.
13. *Rag Maru, Asatpadian*, Mohalla V.
14. *Dhammapada*, verse 223.

XXVII

MUSLIM ATTITUDE TOWARDS GURU NANAK

MUSHIR-UL-HAQ

The Muslim orthodoxy did not take much notice of Guru Nanak ; nor did it pay enough attention to his teachings ; but millions of Muslims in the Punjab and elsewhere honoured him and loved him as a great saint.

Why did the Muslim orthodoxy remain indifferent to Guru Nanak ? Before we answer this question we have to know the meaning of the term Muslim orthodoxy. By Muslim orthodoxy we mean the class of Muslim divines which was the backbone of the government in medieval India insofar as it supplied the personnel for the judiciary as well as for other religious establishments. The *shaykhul-Islam*, the *qazis*, the *muftis* and the *muhtasibs*, for example, were recruited from this class without whose help no government, during the period under discussion, could properly function. On the other hand, the Muslim orthodoxy also depended on the ruler for its power, if not for its very livelihood, because without his support it could not exercise much influence in matters of religion. To preserve the integrity of the Muslim society, it was but necessary for the Muslim orthodoxy to keep constantly a watchful eye on every heretical movement emerging amongst the Muslims. But the Muslim orthodoxy usually did not take notice of the movement arising amongst the non-Muslims as long as it did not directly or indirectly aim at disintegrating the Muslim society.

Against this background we can understand the reason of the indifference of the Muslim orthodoxy to the movement initiated by Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak was born of Hindu parents. At no time did he claim to be a Muslim. His being a Hindu by birth made him an outsider as far as the Muslim orthodoxy was concerned. And this saved him from persecution to which a Muslim would have been subjected, if he had said half of the critical things against Islamic traditions as Guru Nanak did. Knowing the fate of men like Sayyid Muhammad of Jawnpur¹ and other heterodox Muslims, we can very well imagine what would have happened to Guru Nanak had he been born in a Muslim family.

Sikh literature suggests that Muslims used to meet Guru Nanak and listen to his teachings. On the basis of these meetings one may be led to think that Muslims might have embraced Nanakism, which we

would prefer to call Sikhism. But this inference will appear doubtful to those who know how strong the hold of Muslim orthodoxy was over the Muslim society. Except in a few cases here and there, we can say with full confidence that Sikhism was expanding at the cost of Hinduism ; it did not find converts among Muslims. It was an accepted rule during that period—and it is still so, at least in theory—that a Muslim is not allowed to renounce Islam. An apostate is to be killed, it is believed. The Muslim orthodoxy was really very strict in the matter of apostasy. There are evidences that the Muslim orthodoxy actually put to death some of those non-Muslims who were reported to have accepted Islam but were not willing to remain Muslims.² Had there been cases of Muslims becoming Sikhs, the Muslim orthodoxy could not have taken it lightly. But the Muslim historians are silent about any such cases where Muslims were executed for renouncing Islam in order to become Sikhs.

The Sikh literature does not definitely say that any Muslim renounced his religion and became a Sikh. It only mentions that the Muslims also used to listen to Guru Nanak, and sometimes they even had religious discourses with him. As a matter of fact, we know only one man, Mardana, who is said to have been born of Muslim parents but had become a devoted disciple of Guru Nanak.

Moreover, it is an accepted fact that no Sikh Guru asked his followers to change their names after they became Sikh. So much so that no objection was, seemingly, made on their retaining their Hindu-caste appellations. That is why many caste appellations are common between the Sikhs and the Hindus. But has anybody ever heard of a *Faruqi Sikh*, or a *Sayyid Sikh* or an *Ansari Sikh* ? It cannot be suggested that the Muslims after entering a new faith did not like to identify themselves with their past. We know Muslims who after accepting Christianity, like Rev. Abdus-Subhan and Padre Dr Ahmad Shah, who translated the Quran into Hindi, retained their Muslim names.

This proves the thesis that the converts to the teachings of Guru Nanak were as a rule non-Muslims. Hence the indifference of the Muslim orthodoxy.

When we come to the non-orthodox section of the Muslim society, we do find a response to the personality and the teachings of Guru Nanak. Since this group did not consider itself bound to follow the mandate of the Muslim orthodoxy, it adopted an independent outlook towards people outside of the Islamic fold. These were people who paid careful attention to what Guru Nanak was saying, and then transmitted his teachings to their own brethren. One of the best representatives of this trend among the Muslims was Muhsin Fani. In his famous book, in Persian, on comparative religion, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, he not only paid a tribute to the personality of Guru Nanak but also attempted to interpret his teachings in the light of the Sikh practices of his time.

Guru Nanak, to Muhsin, was a man of great piety. The striking thing in Guru Nanak, as Muhsin Fani saw it, was his profound faith in the oneness of God, and his respect for the teachings of Prophet Muhammad as well as for those of the Hindu divines. Muhsin regarded Guru Nanak as one who was trying to bridge the 'religious' gulf between the two principal communities of India. He says :

Guru Nanak revered Muslim saints as well as Hindu *avatars*. But he always reminded that they were all creatures of God. None of them was to be regarded as the Creator. His involvement in Islam and in Hinduism was such that it is said that he carried the rosary of the Muslims in his hand and the sacred thread of the Hindus on his body.³

In short, Muhsin Fani is very appreciative so far as the personality of Guru Nanak is concerned. But he becomes critical when he comes to the Sikhs of his own time. This must, however, be kept in mind that Muhsin Fani does not use the Islamic standards to judge the religious life of the Sikhs. He has taken the teachings of Guru Nanak as the real standards to examine his followers. To quote Muhsin :

The followers of Guru Nanak increased in number by the time of Guru Arjun. However, they did not stick to the teachings of their first Guru. Guru Nanak had emphatically said that he was a man, but his followers made him God (*Khuda*). They should remember what Baba Nanak said about himself and about God. God, according to Guru Nanak, was *Niranjan*, *Brahma*, and *Parmeshwar*. Baba Nanak had also said that the Creator was bodiless. Now the Sikhs have come to believe that Baba Nanak himself did not have a body: it was only for our sake that he appeared in a mortal body. How sad it is that it was Guru Nanak who had rejected the Hindu idea of incarnation and of transfiguration, but his followers have not discarded this belief. The result is that the subsequent Gurus, to the Sikhs, are none other than Nanak, whom they mistake for God.⁴

In defence of the Sikhs it can be said that Muhsin Fani being an outsider could not very well comprehend the Sikh philosophy of Guruship. However, that is beside the point. We are not interested here in knowing how far Muhsin Fani was correct in interpreting the Sikh philosophy. He has been mentioned here only to show that unlike the Muslim orthodoxy, the non-orthodox section of the Muslim society did take respectful notice of Guru Nanak and of his teachings. This trend continued. It continued even at a time when the Muslims had lost their political authority in India, and, under the influence of political prejudice, they considered most of the time all the non-Muslim communities of India hostile to the cause of Islam and of the Muslims.

What the Muslims of India think about Guru Nanak in our own time can very well be seen by reading those poems of Iqbal in which he had paid a sincere tribute to Guru Nanak. In his poem entitled, "Nanak," Iqbal describes the social and religious conditions of India since the time of the Buddha in the following way :

People took no heed of the message of Gautama,
 They didn't recognize their own shining pearl.
 Alas! the unfortunates remained ignorant of the message of truth.
 The tree, indeed, is unaware of the sweetness of its fruit.
 The Buddha disclosed the life's secret,
 But India remained proud of her contemplative thought.

In this way, Iqbal goes on describing the miserable condition of a large section of the people of India who were the victims of the Brahmanical orthodoxy. Then he comes to Guru Nanak and concludes:

Again the temple was radiated with light,
 Again the Abrahamic radiance illumed Azar's abode.
 Again the call for *tauhid* was raised in the Punjab
 When a perfect man awoke India from her slumber.⁵

In another song, which Iqbal called the "National Song for the Indian Children," he refers to Guru Nanak in the same way in which he mentions the great Muslim saint, Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti. He says :

The land where Chishti delivered the message of truth,
 The land where Nanak sang the song of *tauhid*,
 The land which Tatars made their home,
 The land which lured the Arabs from Arabia,
 That land is my home—that is my home.⁶

It will not be an exaggeration if I say that among all the non-Muslim religious personalities born in India, Guru Nanak was perhaps the only one whom the Muslims regarded as one of them. They took him for one who at no stage was willing to compromise on the question of the oneness of God. So it appears that, in spite of the indifferent attitude of the Muslim orthodoxy towards Guru Nanak, the Muslim community at large did take great interest in him. It was because of this attitude of the Muslims that till recently one very often used to hear, in the Punjab, the Muslims singing :

Baba Nanak Shah Faqir
 Sikhan da Guru, Musalmana da Pir.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For a detailed account of Sayyid Muhammad of Jawnpur, see M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, pp. 102-112.
2. For a typical case of this kind, see M. Mujeeb, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
3. Muhsin Fani, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* (Persian text), Kanpur, Nawalkishore Press, n.d., p. 223.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
5. Iqbal, *Bang-i-dara*.
6. *Ibid.*

XXVIII

SIKHISM AND YOGA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF GURU NANAK'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE YOGIS

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The word *yoga*, derived etymologically from the root *yuj*, 'to bind together,' 'to hold fast,' 'to yoke,' (Latin : *jugum*, French : *joug*) has served to designate three broad-based meanings throughout Indian philosophy. It has meant a technique, method of meditation and spiritual discipline, and all schools of thought have emphasized the necessity of emancipating man from human condition, and on the achievement of absolute freedom of the spirit and on having well-organized discipline for controlling the body, the mind and the soul. The applications also have varied from completely anti-social and anti-human objectives of *Hatha Yoga* to the social and humanistic objectives in Sikhism. Yoga has been applied to such extremely opposite objectives as refusing to live on the one hand and to the lust for life through abandonment to sexual pleasures on the other.

In the Sikh scriptures, the word *yoga* is used in three senses: First, it is used in the sense of the classical yoga of Patanjali. Bhai Gurdas calls Patanjali a *gurmukh*, an enlightened sage,¹ a term used in the Sikh scriptures for perfect saints and ideal Sikhs. Bhai Gurdas also shows the close affinity between the objectives of Patanjali's yoga and Sikhism, Patanjali achieving them through yoga practices, whereas Sikhism achieving them through moral and spiritual discipline of the Guru's wisdom.² A clean mind and a clean heart show the real self of man. This is the fundamental principle of Patanjali's yoga as well as that of Sikhism.³

Second, the word *yoga* is used by Guru Nanak in the sense Hatha Yogis use it, and he calls it *Hatha Nigreha*—"restraint through self-will."⁴ The Kanphata Yogis of the Gorakhnath School employed it with various techniques. All the twelve sects of these yogis had employed different techniques and methods of meditation. Guru Nanak mentions various schools by name, and the discussions and comments which the Guru has recorded in his writings show that he was thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of Hatha Yogis, as enunciated in their basic texts such as *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita* and *Siva Samhita*. When we read these texts side by side with Guru Nanak's comments

on their doctrines and techniques, we come to the conclusion that in the light of his knowledge and experience Guru Nanak presents a very analytical criticism of these works.

Third, Guru Nanak uses the word *yoga* to denote his own system also, but to distinguish it from other schools of thought he calls it *Gurmukh Yoga*, or *Gurmat Yoga*, or *Sahaja Yoga*.⁵ The first two indicate that *yoga* in Sikhism is strictly according to the doctrines of the Guru, or Guru's wisdom (*Gurmat*). The word *Sahaja* is also used for *Gurmat Yoga*, but it has a different meaning and significance in Sikhism from its earlier usage in Buddhism, Tantra, and Vaishnavism.

The Sikh scriptures have accepted most of the physiology of *Samkhya-Yoga*. Man is considered to be a blend of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, although the relation between them is described in the light of Sikh doctrines in which God is the Supreme Creator and Destroyer. The *Prana-sakti* is accepted as a vital force of life and plays an important part in the theory and practice of Sikh mysticism.⁶ The existence of Kundalini is accepted as a fact, but the *Hatha Yoga* techniques (*mudras*) employed to awaken it are strongly reprobated as dangerous. Kundalini can easily be awakened through *prana-japa* (*simrin*), *kirtan*⁷ and *satsang* (meditation on the Divine Name, and its sempiternal repetition, abandonment to Divine music and song, and communion with Truth through holy men, and mental association with exalted spiritual life). The Sikh Gurus also accept the existence of 72,000 *nadis*⁸ (nerve channels) which are also called *ghar* (house, because the spirit is supposed to reside and work through them). *Ida*, *Pingla*, *Susmana*⁹ *nadis* are frequently mentioned when the inner mystic experiences are described. They are also called the *Ganga*, *Yamuna*, and *Sarasvati*. The first two are also called *Surya* and *Chandra* channels.¹⁰ The conjunction of *Ida*, *Pingla* and *Susmana* is called *Triveni*.

The division of the inner being of man into nine regions (*nav-grah*) dominated by the tenth region (*dasam duar*)¹¹ or *turiya* (the fourth superconscious state) is accepted and the experiences of *anhata-nada*¹² are vividly and repeatedly described in Sikh scriptures. The *chakras* (circles, discs, usually translated 'centres') are recognized as lower seats of cosmic energy existing in the latent state.¹³ The physiological findings of *Samkhya-Yoga* thinkers are accepted by Guru Nanak very much as philosophers and historians accept scientific data nowadays. The Gurus accepted the *Samkhya-Yoga* physiological data to the point they could be verified. There is much they have ignored.

There was a tremendous influence of yogis on the religious and cultural life of India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This is quite apparent from the fact that no other school of thought is so often mentioned in the writings of Kabir and Guru Nanak as the yogis are. Almost all the medieval saints vigorously commented on *yoga* and *yogis*, and this confrontation with the yogis continued even in Sikh

history up to the time of Guru Gobind Singh. The twelve sects of yogis exercised vast influence on the country from their monastic centres called *siddha-asanas* or *siddha-ashramas* which also became great centres of pilgrimage. Most of these centres were named after Gorakh and his companions, and sometimes after Siva. The asceticism and renunciation of the yogis, their display of yogic feats and occult powers, their magic and mysticism attracted every Indian from a king to a beggar. The genuine seekers and the pretenders of yogic powers went from village to village, from door to door all over the world, preaching cynical contempt of the world and mystifying their life and doctrines.

Guru Nanak strongly felt the disastrous influence of the yogis on Indian society. To counteract their unworldly, unhealthy, anti-social and anti-human influences, Guru Nanak visited almost all the strongholds of the yogis to give to their leaders a new direction of life and outlook. He went there to enlighten them as they were doing tremendous harm to the society and Indian civilization in their unquestioned zeal to do good to individuals in the name of yoga. He admired their courage, their singleness of purpose, their thirst for knowledge, their passion to know God through inner knowledge and experience, but he strongly criticized their pessimism, their cynicism, their contempt for society and women, and their dangerous and selfish individualism. From Gorakhmata in the North to Rameshvaram and Jaffna in the South, from Kamrup to Kabul, he visited all the centres of the yogis. He even went to the inaccessible Himalayas, the Sumer Parbat, the exact location of which is given by Alberuni as north-east of Kailash,¹⁴ and he had open discussions with them. Most of these discussions and comments on their questions have been recorded by Guru Nanak in his writings. His *Siddha-Goshti* (Dialogue with the Yogi-Siddhas) alone has 23 questions and answers. Wherever he met the yogis, his discussions with them led to an overwhelming victory of his philosophical and mystical doctrines over the views of the yogis. The proud and power-conscious yogis were not only humbled but they accepted Guru Nanak as their Master and the age-old names of such strongholds of the yogis as Gorakhmata were changed into Nanakmata or Nanak's shrine. Bhai Gurdas highlights this historical fact when he says: "Guru Nanak met all Siddhas, Nathas, and followers of *avatars* and after discussions made them realize the futility of their doctrines."¹⁵

Yoga affirms the existence of God. This God is not the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the universe. He is the Isvara, the Immanent Spirit (Spinoza's God) whose manifesting Word is Om.¹⁶ He is not the transcendent *Akal Purusa* of Sikhism, but a *Purusa* who has been since eternity. He cannot be summoned by prayer, devotion and faith, but his collaboration can be acquired by a yogi for his inner life. Isvara can hasten the process of deliverance: he helps them towards a more speedy arrival at *samadhi*. Isvara's role is comparatively small.¹⁷ Patanjali says

that Isvara was the guru of the sages of time immemorial, for he adds Isvara is not bound by time.¹⁸ Thus Isvara for Patanjali is only a Macro-Yogin, later on called *Adi Natha* or *Adi Siva*. Later commentators on Patanjali like Vacaspati Misra and Vijnana Bhikhsu accord Isvara great importance. This is perhaps because when they lived, India was full of mystical devotional currents. Nilakantha holds that God, though inactive, helps yogins like a magnet. He gives a Will capable of predetermining the lives of men.¹⁹ The word *Isvarapranidhana* occurs four times in the *Yoga-Sutra*, namely in I-23, II-1, II-32 and II-45. Dasgupta thinks that the meaning of the word is not uniform in the *Yoga-Sutra*, for whereas in I-23, it stands for love, homage, and adoration of God, in subsequent portions it means "bestowal of all our actions upon God."²⁰

For Guru Nanak it is God from whom all come, who loves and lives in all human beings and who is the final refuge of all men. Though Himself ever-distinct from His creation, He yet pervadeth all that He has made, for apart from Him nothing could exist. He is unseen yet revealed; He knows our needs and His every act is for our welfare. At His bidding religions arise, prophets speak out His Will to men, and at His bidding and according to His Will civilizations evolve and are destroyed in various cycles of challenge and response. All the Sikh scriptures are replete with this conception of God.²¹ In the *Siddha-Goshti*, the great dialogue between Guru Nanak and the yogis, the siddhas put a volley of questions: "What are your views about the beginning of creation? Where did the eternal (*sunya*) reside? What special technique of yoga (*mudra*) do you adopt for attaining divine knowledge? What is the spiritual power which resides in everyone? How can the stake of death be burnt? How can the abode of the Fearless be attained? How can the state of peace and contentment be attained?"²² "From where has the spirit of man come? Where does it go and where is it absorbed? How can reality and liberation be attained? How can we attain the love of the Divine? You say, He is the Creator and Knower: How can this mystery be understood, O Nanak?"²³

Guru Nanak replies: "By His Will the spirit of man comes. By His Will, he departs and by His Will he remains absorbed in Him. From the perfect Guru, man understands Truth. He attains liberation and divine knowledge through the Word." "Sublime and wonderful is reflection of the Primal Being. His abode in the beginning was in perpetual *sunya* (divine silence). The wisdom of the Guru is revealed in every heart. Through the Guru's Word, the eternal spirit is attained. The perfect Reality is attained effortlessly (not through *Hatha Yoga*). The seeker who searches and serves Him and thinks not of anything else will attain Him. Sublime is His Will. He who realizes His Will knows the mystery of life and truth. He who becomes detached by effacing himself and realizes the truth, know him to be a true yogi."²⁴ Thus Guru Nanak's

discussion with the yogis brings out clearly the difference between metaphysical doctrines of yoga and Sikhism.

Both in Patanjali's yoga and in Sikhism the world is real and not illusory as it is in Vedānta. In yoga, the world exists because of the ignorance of the spirit, but in Sikhism it exists because of the creative and sustaining Will of God, called *hukam* or *amar*, terms borrowed from the Quran. In yoga, when the last self shall have found its freedom, the creation in its totality will be reabsorbed into the primordial substance. In Sikhism, creation and dissolution depend on the Will of God. He need not wait for any such point of spiritual evolution anticipated by yoga.

Yoga lays great stress on the purification and control of the body under the belief that if the body is pure and under control, the mind will be under control. Sikhism believes that if the mind is pure and under control, the body will easily be controlled. Mere physical purity is in no way instrumental in attaining mental and spiritual purity. *Nauli* and *dhoti*²⁵ which are so important for the practising yogis are considered of not much importance in Sikhism. Fasting and mortification of the body which are employed by the yogis are also rejected by Guru Nanak as dangerously egoistic, and in no way helpful to a healthy spiritual life. "As long as you do not concentrate on the love of God, all yogic feats of physical purification such as *nauli* or efforts to awaken the serpent power through *pranayama* techniques of *recak*, *purak*, *kumbhak*, (inhaling, retaining and expelling the breath) are physical feats, and not religion. It is hypocrisy to call it religion or *dharma*, moral or spiritual discipline. No one can attain either spiritual exaltation or His love through these feats."²⁶ "Through *nauli* and *dhoti* and associated acts of physical purification, one attains neither the stability of mind nor any spiritual enlightenment. Any *pranayama* or breathing technique without associating it with the 'Name' and the presence of God is futile. Fasting, self-mortification and artificial restraints put on the body do not in any way enlighten or illumine the mind."²⁷

The essential elements of physical purity (*niyama*) are applied to mental life in Sikhism. *Sauc* (cleanliness) in Sikhism means the absence of mental impurities. *Tapa* (restraint) also means control over the senses and passions, and not asceticism. *Samtosa* (serenity) is a common feature of yoga and Sikhism. In yoga, *samtosa* stands for endurance, fortitude, the overcoming of physical suffering in the stoic sense. In Sikhism, it means mental and spiritual serenity, contentment, and abandonment to divine love and will.

The two main aims of yoga are *ekagarta* (concentration) and *samadhi* (ecstasy). One is achieved through mental discipline, whereas the other through spiritual effort as culmination of mental efforts. There are eight *angas* of yoga: (1) restraint (*yama*); (2) discipline (*niyama*); (3) bodily attitudes and postures (*asanas*); (4) rhythmic respiration (*pranayama*); (5) emancipation of sensory activity from the domination of exterior objects

(*pratyahara*); (6) concentration (*dharana*); (7) yogic meditation (*dhyana*) and (8) *samadhi*.

The aim of the first six *angas* is to achieve *ekagarta* or a determined and continuous concentration. Sikhism also aims at *ekagarta* or *liv-linta* (absorption in mental poise). In yoga, *ekagarta* is attained through yogic techniques, whereas in Sikhism, it is attained through higher inspiration of Divine music, poetry and the inspiration of the Divine Word, and songs of blessedness. It is not the egoistic will of the yogi that can stop the mind from wandering, nor the physical concentration of the eyes and mind on any point of physical object that can really help him in the concentration of mind, but it is the music and inspiration of the Divine Word, the love inspired by the Guru, the spiritual exaltation felt in communion with enlightened saints and holy men, plaintive songs of devotion (*kirtan*), which can bring the mind to poise and stability. To arrest the psycho-mental flux by yoga may be physiological concentration, but it certainly is not the spiritual and meditational concentration of the mind. In yoga, the object of meditation is usually some physical object, but in Sikhism, concentration on images, pictures and physical objects is completely rejected. Concentration can best be attained by disciplining the mind and human consciousness (*surti*) to the music and spirit of the Divine Word.²⁸

In classical yoga, the spiritual discipline centres on *mudras*, techniques employed to awaken Kundalini to pierce all the lotuses (*chakras*). The flow of *prana* (vital-breath) is directed through Ida, Pingala and Susmana, and the serpent power is awakened to achieve *samadhi*. Guru Nanak calls this *Kasta-Yoga* (or Yoga through pain and agony).²⁹ Guru Nanak's spiritual discipline is based on a natural, humanly possible, and easy method based on singleminded devotion, meditation with a pure and dedicated love, and steady moral and spiritual effort through service, dedication, and inner illumination. Whereas classical yoga works fundamentally through egoistic will, self-love, and lust for inner powers, Guru Nanak's spiritual discipline begins with humility, self-effacement, the dedication of the mind, body and soul to the cause of Truth. Whereas the spiritual discipline of yoga aims at extinguishing active love, and leading to absorption in *samadhi*, Guru Nanak inspires the disciples with what is called *hos-masti*, i.e. widely-awake in ecstasy. The key to spiritual discipline of yoga is intense meditation on the cosmic energy and control over it, whereas the key to spiritual discipline of Sikhism is the music and light of the Divine Word, the Truth.

Yoga ethics are individualistic, whereas the Sikh ethics are fundamentally socialistic. Yoga ethics centre on the self of man. The Sikh ethics have their roots in society and civilization. Yoga ethics are escapist and the yogis have always shown open contempt for women and society. Guru Nanak condemned all types of escapism from society and showed as much respect for women as he had for men. The anti-social and anti-human

influences of yoga undermined the cultural and political foundations of India so much that their extreme pessimism and unworldliness made the people politically weak, and indifferent to their collective responsibility and they became an easy prey to a handful of invaders. The best men retired to their forest dwellings for yoga practices and for acquiring *mukti* (liberation). When Guru Nanak met the yogis of the Himalayas, he blamed them for the horrible plight and moral degeneration of the Indian society. "Because enlightened men like you are hiding in mountain caves, instead of working for the moral regeneration of the people," said Guru Nanak, "Indian society has become corrupt and is on the verge of a great disaster."³⁰

Historians generally blame Buddhism for this state of affairs, but from the twelfth century to the fifteenth, the influence of Buddhism was negligible. This is clear from the fact that we do not find a single reference to Buddhism in the writings of Ramananda, Namdeva, Kabir and Guru Nanak, but they all refer to yoga and the yogis a number of times, and their pernicious influence on the Indian society. The Nathpanthi yogis were spread all over India, and they had corroded social life almost in every place. The following are the main features of the yoga ethics which Guru Nanak criticized strongly, and gave to Sikhism more enduring alternative doctrines:

Asceticism: To renounce society and home, had become the first article of faith with the yogis. "They smear their body with ashes to show they have become recluses, but within them the fires of egoism and wrath rage, and without divine knowledge they are not yogis but hypocrites."³¹ Wherever there was any influence of the yogis, the family life tended to be disintegrated. "He preaches yoga to the world but fattens on the earnings of other people. How can he attain truth after letting his mind wander away from truth? He pretends to have renounced the world, yet he lusts for women and power. He is actually neither a recluse nor a worldly man."³² The criticism of asceticism in the Sikh Scriptures has created one serious misunderstanding among the Sikhs. They take this condemnation of asceticism as an encouragement to an eat-drink-and-be-merry life, which is also seriously-disapproved by Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak strongly advocated restraint of the highest order without having to renounce society. He condemned all tendencies leading to a materialistic life of pleasures and physical enjoyment.

If anyone reads the literature attributed to the Nathpanthi and other schools of yogis and ascetics from the seventh century to the fifteenth century, one is shocked at the language used to condemn women by the yogis. She was considered to be a curse to society, born from evil and living in lust to misguide and destroy all that is best in society. But Guru Nanak questions: "If you hate women so much, why do you go to them while you are meditating in your forest dwellings?" Guru Nanak firmly to beg your food? Why do you let your mind wander after them even

states that woman is the half of human life, and the more important half. "From her are born sages, saints and kings. Without women we can neither be born, nor can we grow or survive. Why should we condemn women who are the doorway to liberation."³³ "You renounce women and yet you secretly think of possessing and loving women. You go out in search of disciples, without possessing knowledge of the Divine Word. You are stinking in lower passions. Outwardly, you are recluses but within your hearts you carry poison and you spread poison."³⁴

If Indian society is rightly or wrongly accused of escapism and pessimism, it is mainly because of the historically disastrous effect of the yogis and ascetic cults. When Guru Nanak met the yogis of the Himalayas they were impressed with his glowing personality and courage. They invited Guru Nanak to become a yogi and proudly stated their views thus:

Loharipa:

Know this to be discipline of yoga,
Which I beg you to adopt, O Nanak;
Keep away from towns and highways;
Live in the forests under the trees
On roots and wild fruits;
As a yogi, you must concentrate on knowledge;
For self-purification, you must
Visit places of pilgrimage.
Such a yogi can be free from impurities.

Guru Nanak:

Even while living in towns and on highways,
One should be wide awake and covet not,
The wealth and women of neighbours.
Without the Divine Name,
The mind cannot attain rest and peace.
The inner hunger will not be stilled.
The true life of wealth of cities
Has been revealed by the Guru within me.
We should trade in Truth through self-realization.
We should eat but little, we should sleep little.
This is the essence of wisdom and true yoga.

Loharipa:

Accept, O divine man, the holy order of yoga;
Wear the symbols of patched coat, earrings,
Carry the beggar's-bowl and be a recluse;
Out of the six systems accept the yoga system.
Out of the twelve sects, join our leading sect.
This is the only path to enlighten and control the mind.
You will then neither suffer nor falter.

Guru Nanak:

This is the way to attain true yoga;
 This is my system of the enlightened ones:
 Contemplate the Word within increasingly;
 The discarding of pride and attachment means to me
 the wearing of earrings,
 One must give up lust, wrath and egoism;
 By contemplating the Word everything is understood.
 The patched coat and the beggar's-bowl
 Should be to see God in all things,
 Only God can liberate the true seekers;
 God is truth, His Name is truth,
 Whoever wishes may test the utterance of the Guru.
 For me there is no begging and begging-bowl,
 The firmament is my cap, the body the prayer-mat,
 My mind is the loin cloth in my discipline,
 With such a mind one must strive to attain,
 Truth, contentment and restraint.
 The yogis enlightened thus ever remember God.³⁵

This statement of Guru Nanak brings out vividly the contrast between the ethics of yoga and that of Sikhism. When Guru Nanak is asked how it is possible to live in this turbulent world with a poised mind of a saint, Guru Nanak replies "One must live in the world just as a lotus lives in a marshy pond, retaining its beauty and fragrance, and just as a swan crosses the sea disregarding the rough waves and the tide."³⁶ There are, nevertheless, some strong points of resemblance. Both yoga and Sikhism reacted strongly to the Brahmanical concept of the fourfold social order based on caste and class differences. Both yoga and Sikhism have discarded all Brahmanical rites and rituals. Both of them have emphasized the importance of the religion of experience and inner knowledge. Both of them emphasized the fact that by controlling the mind, one wins one's way to victory over everything else. Both of them tried to break provincial and national barriers and carried their message beyond the frontiers of India.

Both yoga and Sikhism are essentially mystic faiths. Whereas yoga is mysticism without social and cultural foundations, Sikhism is firmly embedded in theory and practice in the society and the world. Both yoga and Sikhism aim at achieving the *turiya* state, also called *sunya* and *nirvana*. The first term is borrowed from the Upanishads, whereas the last two acquired unusual importance in Buddhism. They had negative significance in earlier Buddhism, whereas *sunya* and *nirvana* have a positive significance in Mahayana and Zen Buddhism.

The *turiya* of the yogis is acquired after severe practices of some *mudras*. It is a state of mindlessness (*manonmani*), a state of *samadhi* in which the *atman* and the mind became one. In Sikhism, *turiya* is the state of superconsciousness in which one can see the light of God face

to face. One can realize the unknowable, see the unseen to the extent a finite being can experience the Infinite. It is a state of perfect revelation of the Divine Being in His transcendent and immanent states. Man becomes one with God and God acts through man in whom He reveals Himself. With the exception of very few yogis, yoga and yogis of various schools of thought have always aimed at acquiring *siddhis* (miraculous powers). Their aim has been to acquire occult powers and through occult powers acquire fame, control over society, and the fulfilment of their low desires. Guru Nanak considered this passion for *siddhis* or occult powers dangerous as a rich man's lust for wealth. He says in the *Japji*, *ridhi sidhi avara sad*, that is, "the craving for occult powers is an unspiritual passion, which leads man away from the path of truth."

Though thou art adept in *siddhis*
 Endowed with occult powers;
 And powers to acquire wealth;
 Though thou canst change thy shape;
 And at will can be seen and become unseen;
 Though men revere and adore thee,
 Even so, O yogi, beware, lest thou forget,
 And remember not the name of God.

A Sikh mystic aspires after spiritual perfection to serve the cause of truth and God, to justify His ways to men, and to bear testimony to His existence, grace and love. He strives for humility and a unitive life in God and for such a life occult powers or anything else inspired by selfishness and egoism are the greatest danger.

Sikhism has been rightly called *Sahaja Yoga* by the Gurus and a Sikh a Raja-Yogi. Both the terms have different histories in the past, and their significance in Sikhism is quite different. The classical yoga is generally divided into (1) *Hatha Yoga* (2) *Laya Yoga* (*Bhakti*, *Shakti*, *Mantra* and *Tantra Yogas*) (3) *Dhyana Yoga* (4) *Raja Yoga* (*Jnana*, *Karma*, *Kundalini* and *Samadhi Yoga*). The *Raja Yoga* is considered supreme, and kingly among the yogas. But in Sikhism, the concept of a Raja-Yogi coincides with Plato's concept of the philosopher king. The *bhattas*, or bards who before meeting the Gurus were traditional Vedic scholars, while describing the personality of the Sikh Gurus, call them Raja-Yogis, very much as King Janak was in ancient history. So the *Raja Yoga* concept in Sikhism is to synthesize spirituality with temporal power and was also known during the time of Guru Hargobind as the *miri-piri* concept, in which spirituality and the sword of freedom became a part of the personality of the Sikhs and the Guru.

The word *Sahaja* has strange history in Indian thought. From an extreme denial of the senses, there was a swing to the left to the state of complete abandonment to passions. From the *Hatha Yoga* people turned to the *Sahaja* cults in which the seekers of inner mysteries abandoned

themselves to passions. Poets like Chandidas and Vidyapati no doubt used the *Sahaja* doctrines for erotic mysticism of the Krishna cult, and their motives were pure and noble. Their writings on *Sahaja* come close to that of Sikhism, the major difference being that Sikhism rejects personal gods, and eroticism of the Radha-Krishna romance.

But in the *Vamacara* cult (Leftists), the devotees expected to attain union between Siva and Sakti through ritual indulgence in wine, meat and sexual union. The *Kularnva Tantra* (VIII, 107) even insists that union with God can be obtained only through sexual union. Such sensuality in the name of *Sahaja* is still prevalent and is severely criticized by the Gurus as Shaktism at its worst.

The *Sahaja* is used to connote anything attained in a natural, spontaneous and easy way. The word is applied to all Sikh doctrines to emphasize its importance in every phase. We have *sahaja asana*,³⁷ *sahaja samadhi*,³⁸ *sahaja ananda*,³⁹ and *sahaja sunya*.⁴⁰

Some of the erotic symbolism normally used in all romantic poetry in world literature is no doubt used in the Sikh scriptures, but nowhere is sex or any other lower passion considered a means or an end in religious life, as is done in *Sahaja* cults of *Tantra*. Sikhism is the *Sahaja* faith in the sense that none of the agonizing or torturous practices of the ascetic cults are recommended in it. The spiritual discipline of Sikhism can be practised in a normal and healthy everyday life.

With the concept of *Sahaja* are also associated the much-used and abused doctrine of *sunya* and *anhada sabad* (unstruck music). *Sunya* at the metaphysical level is used for the transcendent Spirit of God. Guru Nanak calls God, "a yogi sitting in a *sunya* state of self-existing transcendence."⁴¹ "But when a man attains *nirvana*, he achieves a state of rest and peace in God, a true revelation of His divine presence, which Guru Nanak calls *sunya*."⁴² "He then feels God's light (*sunya*) within and without, and also pervading throughout the universe. It is identified with *turya* or the fourth state (*chautha pad*). The mystery of His all-pervading light is visibly revealed in every heart and soul."⁴³ "*Sunya* is also identified with the tenth seat of consciousness (*dasam duar*) where one hears its pure and perfect unstruck music (*anhata sabad*)."⁴⁴ Guru Nanak calls it *anhada sunya*; certainly it is not the void of early Buddhism. It is a positive experience, just as the Zen-Buddhists claim it to be.

To sum up, Sikhism can rightly be called the most practicable form of *Sahaja Yoga* for a seeker of God and Truth. It has eliminated all the unhealthy elements of classical yoga which, when taken either to the rightist or leftist extremes, did more harm than good to the Indian society and civilization.

A yogi (practising classical yoga) reacts against what is normal, secular and human. In complete opposition to normal life, he thirsts for the unconditioned, for individual freedom and for power. His ambition is a complete reversal of human values on the social and cultural plane.

He wants to build around himself a world of gods quite different from the world of men. In Sikhism, all religious values and practices should be human and normal, and they should not only exalt the soul of the individual but also his light must become a light for the world; his power must be a power at the service of humanity. It must, however, be admitted that during the last one hundred years or so, the Sikhs, by and large, have abandoned their historic ideal of *Gurmukh yogis*, of living a life of restraint and enlightenment; and the noblest ideals for which the Sikh Gurus lived and died are becoming a thing of the past. There is a callous disregard of serious thinking and living, and the pre-occupation of the leaders with material gains and political power have made the matters worse. The ideal of *Gurmukh yogis* is disappearing and the cult of *manmukh bhogis*, backed by political power, is gathering ground. It is high time that all serious thinkers should stake all that is in their power to save *Gurmat Yoga* from being eliminated by the destructive forces that have falsely acquired authority and self-assumed sanction. If this dangerous trend is not arrested, Sikhism may suffer great disasters in the next five hundred years.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Sekhnag patanjali mathya gurmukh satar nag sunai, ved atharban bolya, jog bina neh bharam cukai. (Bhai Gurdas, 1:14).
2. Surte culi gyan ki jogi ka jati hoe.
(An intellectual purifies himself through knowledge, whereas the Yogi keeps himself pure through celibacy) (*Guru Granth*, p. 1240).
3. join kar maili arsi, sikal bina neh mukh dikhai, jog padarath nirmala, anhad dhun andar liv lai. (*ibid.*)
4. hath nigreh kar kaya chijai, vart tapan kar man nahi bhijai. (*Guru Granth*, p. 905).
5. gurmukh jog kamavai audhu, jat sat sabad vicari. (*ibid.*, p. 907).
6. paun guru pani pit jata. (*Guru Granth*, p. 1110).
pran man tan jia data (*ibid.*, p. 249).
7. kundalini surjhi satsang. (*ibid.*, p. 1402).
8. bahatar ghar ik purkh samaya. (*ibid.*, p. 783).
9. ida pingala aur sukhmana tin basai ik thai. (*ibid.*, p. 974).
ida pingala aur sukhmana paune bandha rahau go, cand suraj doe sam kar rakho brahm jot mil jao go (*ibid.*, p. 973).
10. sur sar sos lai, som sar pokh lai
udai neh hans neh kandh chijai.
11. dasam duara agam apara param purkh ki ghati
dasven duar pargat hoe aya
teh anhad sabad vajah dhun bani sahje sahaj samai. (*ibid.*, p. 1069).
nau ghar thape thapanhare dasven vasa alakh apare. (*ibid.*, p. 1036).
12. anhad runjhunkar sada dhun nirbhau kai ghar vaid
anhad sabad vaje din rati. (*ibid.*, p. 1034).
avigati ki gati gurmukh jati. (*ibid.*, p. 904).

13. ultat pavan cakra khat bhedē surti sunya anuragi (*ibid.*, p. 333).
14. Edward C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, pp. 243-51.
15. sidh nath avatar sabh gost kar kar kan phadaya, (Bhai Gurdas, *Vars*, 26:21).
nav khandi janaya raj jog jin sati asati (*ibid.*, 29:10).
16. Patanjali, *Yoga-Sutra*, I: 23-27.
17. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, p. 74.
18. He is the Guru of even the ancient sages being not limited by time. (Patanjali, *Yoga-Sutra*, I: 26.)
19. Mircea Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
20. Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 142-43.
21. Guru Nanak, *Japji, Maru Solhe*.
22. adi ko kavan bicar kathiale sunya kahan ghar vaso.
gyan ki mudra kavan kathiale ghat ghat kavan nivaso.
kal ka thiga kion jalile kion nirbhau ghar jai.iai.
sahaja santokh ka asan janai kion chede bairai.iai.
(Guru Nanak, *Siddha-Goshti*, 21)
23. kaha te avai kahan eh javai kahan eh rahe samai.
es sabad ko jo arthavei, tis gur til na tamai.
kion tate, avigate pavai, gurmukh lage pyaro.
ape surta ape karta kahu Nanak bicaro.
(*ibid.*, 22)
24. adi ko bismad bicar kathiale sunya nirantar vas lia.
akalpat mudra gur gyan bicariale ghat ghat saca sarvjia.
gurbacani avigat samaiai tat niranjan sahaj lahai.
Nanak duji kar na karni sevai sikh su khoj lahai.
hukam bismad hukam pachanei jia jugat sac jane soi.
ape met niralam hovai antar sac jogi kahiai soi.
(*ibid.*, 23)
25. *Hatha Yoga Pradipaka*, II: 1-22; II: 33-34; *Gheranda Samhita* I: 12; 1:52.
26. nauli karam bhuyangam bhathi
recak kumbhak purak man hathi
pakhand dharam prit nahj hari sion gursabad maharas paya.
(Guru Granth, p. 1037)
27. hath nigreh kar kaya chijai
vart tapan kar man nahi bhijai . . .
niuli karam khat karam karijai
ram nam bin birtha sas lijai. (*ibid.*, p. 905)
28. gurmukh jog sabad atam cinai hirdai ek murari.
manua asthir sabde rata cha karni sari.
panc mar cit rakho thah. (Guru Granth, p. 907).
jog jugat ki eha pae. (*ibid.* p. 1189)
29. Bhai Mani Singh, *Sikhan di Bhagat Mal*, p. 53.
30. papa girasi pirthami dhaul khada dhar heth pukara
sidh chhap baithe parbatin kaun jagat ko par utara.
(Bhai Gurdas, *Var* I: 29)
31. kareh bibhut lagavai bhasmai
antar krodh candal su haumai
pakhand kinai jog na paiai
bin satgur alakh napaiai. (Guru Granth, p. 1037)
32. jag parbodhai madhi vadhavaih
asan tyag kahe sac pavai
mamta moh kaman hitkari
na audhuti na samsari. (*ibid.*, p. 903)

33. Guru Nanak, *Asa di Var*.
34. hath kamandal kapadya man trisna upji bhari,
istri taj kar kam vyapya cit laya parnari
Sikh kare kar sabad na cinai lampat hai bazari. (*Guru Granth*, p. 1013)
35. Guru Nanak, *Siddha-Goshti*, 9-12.
36. *Ibid.* 5.
37. *Guru Granth*, p. 237.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 1006, 1234.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 772, 773.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 970.
41. sunya mandal ik jogi baisaj; nar na purkh kaho kou kaise. (*Guru Granth*,
p. 685).
42. sunya samadhi rehai liv lagai eka eki sabad vicar (*ibid.*, p. 504)
43. antar sunya bahar sunya, tribhavan sunya masunya.
cauthe sunai jo 'nar janai ta ko pap na punya.
ghat ghat sunya ka jane bheo.
adi purkh niranjan deo. (Guru Nanak, *Siddha-Goshti*, 5)
44. nau sar subhar dasven pure
teh anhat sunya vajaveh ture. (*ibid.*, 53).

XXIX

GURU NANAK AND THE HINDU HERITAGE

K. L. SESHAGIRI RAO

A question is sometimes raised whether Guru Nanak gave humanity some new truth, or whether he merely echoed the ideas contained in the Hindu heritage, especially in the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In my opinion, the question is neither proper nor fair ; for it ignores, first, the historical fact that the great leaders of the world are as much created by history as they are the creators of history ; and second, it ignores the fact that anything new soon becomes old except truth which is valid for all times.

Truth is ageless ; it is ancient, yet it is very modern. It is eternal. Guru Nanak makes this clear in the opening section of the *Japji* :

In the beginning there was Truth ;
In all ages has there been Truth ;
Nanak, even now Truth is eternal ;
And evermore shall Truth prevail.

It is this eternal Truth that Guru Nanak communicated to the world and not any new truth. Hence his teachings are valid and relevant today as they were when he lived and taught five centuries ago.

It is worth noting that the founder of no religion in the world has claimed that he has given to the world absolutely new truth. Each has claimed only to have transmitted the ageless Truth. In the process of transmission, however, every religious teacher has necessarily used the terminology and concepts of the heritage into which he was born. Jesus Christ used the concepts of Judaism and the Buddha those of Brahmanism. This does not mean that they gave their support to all the Jewish and Brahmanical beliefs and practices respectively. Similarly, Guru Nanak also freely used the language and categories of the Hindu heritage. But this does not mean he supported all the Hindu beliefs and practices. In fact, he was the foremost to disapprove and condemn in a forthright manner whatever practice shocked his moral and religious sensibilities.

Guru Nanak realized the eternal Truth and showed others the path of God-realization. He did not base his authority on the Vedas or the Upanishads. The Truth which filled his mind was not borrowed from

books; it came to him as mental illumination. "So says Nanak, so says Nanak" is the burden of his songs. He sang the songs of Divine love. Out of the fullness of heart flowed his message—the message of love of God, the message of brotherhood of man and the law of love in all human relations. He spread his message in a language intelligible to the ordinary man which, henceforth, came to be known as *Gurubani*. It has ever since brought comfort and peace to mankind in moments of stress and strain, misery and death. Its immortal appeal to the heart has continued to uplift humanity. The unsurpassed gift of *Gurubani* is one of the enduring contributions of Guru Nanak to India and the world.

Let me now take one or two instances in which Guru Nanak transcended his Hindu heritage and creatively related the eternal Truth to the needs and problems of his age. The problem of the Hindu-Muslim relations that confronted is a striking example. The antagonism between the two warring communities had resulted in widespread misery. Guru Nanak brought home to his fellowmen the idea that religion, worth its name, ought to bring the healing touch to the suffering humanity and not be instrumental in imposing tyranny, oppression and injustice. It is not the office of a religion to erect physical and emotional barriers between man and man. He insisted that Truth is for all and that it is a unifying force, never a divisive one. He stressed the fundamental of all religions and asked Hindus to become better Hindus, Muslims to be better Muslims. His teachings were thorough and nonsectarian in character. He tried to eliminate the prevalent narrowness of outlook from the followers of both Islam and Hinduism. He endeavoured to bring the two communities closer to each other in mutual harmony and peace. He worked for a brotherhood of the worshippers of one God. His approach to inter-religious relations is still valid and very much needed today. Mahatma Gandhi in our own times has admirably followed the footsteps of Guru Nanak in this respect.

Take again the case of "untouchability." Guru Nanak vigorously protested against this inhuman practice and tried to root it out from society. He went further. He directed his attention to the bringing about of fundamental changes in the thinking of his fellowmen and in their psychological attitudes. He unreservedly rejected the Hindu division of society into high and low castes. Under the inspiration of Guru Nanak's teachings, the institution of *langar* was established. In it, the people of all castes or no caste, high or low, ate together as one fraternal community. By this institution, which has ever since been cherished and continued by the Sikh community, Guru Nanak dealt a severe blow to the practice of untouchability. Here again, Mahatma Gandhi remarkably followed up the principle and programme enunciated by Guru Nanak 500 years ago.

Guru Nanak's most distinctive contribution, I believe, consists in his evolving and presenting a way of life consistent with Truth. He laid

great emphasis on "true living." He said: "Truth is high, but higher still is true living." Guru Nanak referred to the Ultimate Truth as *Akal Murat* and *Karta Purukh* and made Him the guiding-star of life; and exemplified that the love of God makes for freedom, fearlessness and selflessness. True living for him consisted in following the "will of God." He taught that man should lead a life of self-surrender and dedication to God.

Guru Nanak asked his disciples to live in the world by the strength of God and under His eyes. He pointed out to his Hindu brethren that fasts and rituals had no value before God and were of no use to one's fellowmen. He stressed inwardness, spirituality and the ideals of God, His grace and His worship with love and sincerity. He, therefore, wanted his disciples to engage themselves ceaselessly in the remembrance of God and *seva* (service) of fellowmen. Those who followed this way of life emerged as a self-sacrificing and creative community which continues to work as a leaven in the wider society.

Guru Nanak rejected all those elements in the Hindu heritage which were inconsistent with his dynamic "way of life." For instance, he condemned asceticism. He denounced those who retired from the society unwilling to fight the battle of life. He wanted men not to escape evil, but to meet and overcome it. He insisted that men should perform all their duties in society and regarded active life in the world as the best life. He approved all honest occupations as consistent with a religious life and held that the *summum bonum* of life, namely, salvation, could be obtained by man while living and working in society. He, consequently, stressed the importance of married life as a householder; in it he saw the opportunities for love and God-realization.

To sum up, Guru Nanak took religion seriously and profoundly and made it meaningful and relevant to man once again. According to him, religious life encompassed all aspects of life. He sharply protested against Hindu excesses and inequalities. He drew the attention of the Hindus to the core of religion and endeavoured to free it from self-seeking and extraneous elements which had smothered religious life. In the otherwise ever-changing world, he found the elements of permanence in the Name of God and His will. He gave God the central place in life, and declared that in case man was confused about God, his whole life was confused.

XXX

GURU NANAK AND HIS MESSAGE

J. J. KARAM

Biographical Aspect

Guru Nanak was born in 1469. He shuffled off his mortal coil in 1539, handing over his torch to Lehna, Guru Angad Dev, "the limb of his body, the breath of his being," blended himself with his soul and became one with him in spirit. He ushered in a new era in the history of mankind, appearing on the scene at a critical moment in Indian history when the ruling authority was tyrannical and religion had degenerated into ritualism and superstition. His life served as a beacon for his age. He was a great seer, saint and mystic. He was a prolific poet and a unique singer of the praises of God. A prophet of peace, love, truth and renaissance, he was centuries ahead of his times. His universal message is as fresh and true today as it was in his day. It is all the more relevant now when life has been divorced from religion and the new advances of science and technology have generated utter confusion about the basic values of life.

His poetic compositions, as reproduced in the *Guru Granth*, number 699, besides 165 other verses constituting the composite works such as the *Japji*, the *Patti*, the *Allahania*, the *Dakhni Oankar* and the *Siddha-Goshti* (the sermon to the Siddhas). These verses also include those that pertain to five forms of bhakti: (1) *Shanti-Bhakti* (the quietude of mind), (2) *Dasa-Bhakti* (absolute servitude), (3) *Sakhya-Bhakti* (friendly approach), (4) *Madhura-Bhakti* (conjugal approach) and (5) *Joti-jot* (complete immersion). The verses relating to each type represent mysticism of the highest order. From a literary point of view, they are of the purest ray, serene, simple in style, original in metaphor and simile and lucid in imagery and exposition. The present writer is attracted most by verses on *Madhura-Bhakti* in which the relationship between the devotee and the Lord is shown as akin to that of the bride and the bridegroom. The heart-rending grief of a *duhagin's* separation and the bliss of the love-intoxicated *suhaagin*, have been narrated vividly and passionately. However, this relationship has to be understood figuratively. The divine element in man is the fundamental aspiration which

yearns for light, love and liberation. Because of that, man is recognized as a spark of divinity whose destiny takes him towards God.

Guru Nanak discharged the worldly duties committed to his care, whether as a householder, a cowherd, a shop assistant, a storekeeper or a farmer. He gave love to all and shared his all with everyone. Twenty-five years of his life he spent travelling. Wherever he went he spread the gospel of love and of unity of God and brotherhood of man. He preached the *mantra* of *Sat-Nam* (Divine Name) as the panacea for all ills of man. He led mankind "from darkness to light, from unreal to Real, from death to immortality." He revered all religions alike and regarded all conflicts of creeds, castes and classes as meaningless. He explained that the words "Hindu" and "Muslim" were only our names for masks, and that behind all those masks was common humanity. Millions felt irresistibly drawn to him and his message.

None is my enemy,
And none is a stranger to me.
All are my brethren . . .
Caste and birth are unavailing,
Ask those who know the Truth,
Caste and birth are determined by deeds.
And look at the divine light within.

The Metaphysical Aspect

God: God exists. He is the one and the only Supreme Master, Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. He is immortal, eternal, everlasting, without beginning or end. He is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He is formless (*Nirankara* or *Nirguna*) and also with form (*Akara* or *Saguna*). He is self-created, self-established and self-effulgent, beyond the scope of the ravages of Time. He is the author of life and master of its course. None can destroy him whom He wishes to preserve and none can save him whom He has decided to vanquish. Religious and moral laws rest in Him, the majesty of which is supreme and beyond question. He is the avenger of wrongs and the rewarder of rights to everyone according to his deserts. He is also our safety and redemption. He is the inexhaustible treasure-house of virtues. He is the repository of all wisdom, justice and mercy, and the ever-flowing fountain of love and grace. His compassion commands obedience to His Will. He is our father and friend. Before Him, all are equal, none are high or low. He is the virtue of every heart that is softened by a sense of pity or a touch of benevolence. His greatness is so infinite and His love so boundless that He cannot be known, measured or described adequately. He is

the only Lord of the Universe. What exists is One, although the wise speak of him variously. His Will is irresistible, inevitable and unalterable.

I belong to no sect,
I adore but One God.
I see him on the earth below,
And in the heavens above,
And also in all directions.

The greatest of the great is He,
And equally great is His Word.

The Universe : God is the creator of the universe. Before its manifestation, the universe was not. God is the beginning of the universe and will alone survive its end. What, therefore, manifests itself during the middle state of existence is the God's sport—*maya*. Maya is a great enchantress and also a perpetual enigma to both men and angels. It cannot be proved unreal, because everyone feels its presence and power. It cannot also be proved real, because it vanishes with the first spark of spiritual experience. He alone is the True Knower. The entire universe of names and forms is His own mental image ; He can dissolve the whole universe into the ocean of His own being at His Will. Although pervading every particle of the universe, He is not amenable to its effect or influence. He is also beyond the attributes of the three *gunas* (*tama*, *raja*, and *sata*) and also beyond the polarization of pairs of opposites. He is immanent as well as transcendent. Like Him, His universe also cannot be visualized in its entirety. Both are illimitable, immeasurable, inexpressible or, in short, *be-anta*. In Him are interwoven and intertwined countless heavens, earths, planets and interspaces constituting the limitless universe, with multifarious species, living and non-living, all of which are subject to change and decay. God alone is outside the domain of change. In the course of His one eyewink, a billion creations appear and disappear :

But this earth is not the only one ;
There are earths beyond this earth.
There are planets beyond,
And many planets still beyond,
Who but He can comprehend the Infinite ?

Soul : God and soul are, in essence, one and the same. Both are immortal, eternal, changeless and beginningless. It is the soul that is embodied and not the body that is ensouled. The body is a complex of various gross elements and is able to function only as long as the soul is present inside. It is the body that changes, decays and turns on the wheel of birth and death. The nature of transmigration and the effect or outcome of one's own actions (*karmas*) are linked together. The soul that is asleep in the pleasures of the world is unmindful of God ;

the soul that is awakened yearns to be reunited with God. By supreme devotion, a devotee can establish his identity with God and, thereby, become a *jivan-mukta*, i.e., one emancipated during his very lifetime. It is possible to attain to that state of liberation with the aid of *Num* acquired through a spiritual guide or guru with the grace of God. Hence human birth is precious and pregnant with high potentialities.

The Evolutionary Aspect

Guru Nanak has indicated that the evolutionary stages for God-realization are five : (1) *Dharam-Khand* (the field of action), (2) *Gyan-Khand* (the field of knowledge), (3) *Sharam-Khand* (the field of humility), (4) *Karam-Khand* (the field of renunciation), and (5) *Sach-Khand* (the field of Divine Truth). In the first stage, the seeker (*sadhak*), while performing the functions that fall to his lot, has the choice to discriminate between good and evil, with the forces of light within himself, and thereby ascend from *tama* to *raja* and from *raja* to *sata* in order to build up his credit account which gives him a glow of *gyan* in the second stage. He meets his guru, enjoys the company of saints, dwells on the glory of God, understands the purpose of life, develops faith in God and has a craving for union with Him. The third stage sees the diminution of ego and the cultivation of humility, breaking the chains of various vices (*vikaras*). In the penultimate stage, he transcends the three *gunas* as well as the pairs of opposites, attains tranquillity, equipoise, peace and quietude, and reaches the real state of renunciation, renouncing neither the world nor the household but only the desires and expectations arising from the worldly life. The final stage is the acme of the supreme bliss and perfect peace. It signifies self-realization, *mukti*, *jeevan mukti* or *joti jot*. The devotee sees the One in all and all in the One.

The Mind : It is easy to idealize the aforesaid five evolutionary stages, but it is extremely difficult to traverse them, as they necessitate constant and earnest *sadhanas* of *vairag* (non-attachment) and *abhyas* (practice) of the Name. This at once brings us to the mind which always remains motivated by self-gratification. Pleasures of the mind become the means for getting more pleasures, even though there is a shadow of pain present behind every pleasure. Mind is its own friend or foe. It is as much the cause of man's bondage as his liberation. Right action is not possible without right perception by the mind which has to dissociate itself from that which creates sorrow. Happiness consists not in possessions but in the release of the mind from its inhibitions, so as to make it innocent, open, alert, pure and sensitive. The mind should refuse to dwell on evil thoughts. It will then no longer be swayed by the pairs of opposites or by the attributes of *gunas*. For that purpose, it is not necessary either to torture the body or to renounce the world. The mind has to be subdued by itself, as a diamond is cut by a diamond. The subdual of

self means that state where all projections of the mind cease. Such a state can be reached with the aid of *Nam*.

The Nam : *Nam*, *Sat-Nam*, *Ram-Nam* are all synonymous terms. The efficacy of the Lord's Name for the soul's redemption is beyond question or doubt. The remembrance of God is the likeness of God ; forgetfulness of God is the illusion of life. There are a thousand and one names of the Lord ; but it matters not which name the devotee utters, so long as he does so lovingly with one-pointed attention to the exclusion of everything else. His sins will be banished and death shall have no dread for him. He will rest in God. No restraint can restrain him. In fact, he is left with nothing to control by self-control. *Nam* is an unfailing answer to all doubts, difficulties and disturbances. It must be remembered and recited both in joy and grief. It is a confluence where the devotee merges into the Lord. The tongue that has once tasted the sublime sweetness of *Nam* gets averse to all other tastes and flavours.

In the ambrosial hours of the fragment dawn,
Think upon and glorify His Name and greatness.
Our own past actions have put this garment on us,
But salvation comes only through His grace.
Oh Nanak! This alone need we know,
That God, being Truth, is the one light of all.

Devotion : Devotion or *bhakti* has been assigned numerous names such as *jap*, *simran*, and *dhyan*. *Nam* and *bhakti* are indistinguishable and are designed to unite the *bhakta* with the Lord. The Name of God is the form of God and the form of God is the Name of God. That which is formless becomes "of form" with *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the way to self-realization. It is the root of which dispassion is the flower, illumination the fruit. Devotion to God is its own fulfilment. True devotion denotes a life of offering made lovingly and with a pious will. It also denotes firm faith in the greatness and goodness of God as well as in the surrender of one's own will to God's will. Faith is the union of God with the soul. A man of faith must always hold his head on his palm.

The Guru : The Guru (or *Satguru*) and God are, in a way, one, for, the former is totally in tune with the latter. The guru facilitates liaison between the disciple and God. He is the dispenser of God's grace on earth. The guru is the light in darkness. He reveals the Truth to the disciple, keeps a vigilant watch over his progress and guides him to reach the goal of God-realization. The guru is not the goal, yet he is an indispensable link in the chain leading to the goal. He leads, purifies and illuminates the disciple. A genuine guru attracts and retains disciples as the honey of flowers attracts the bees. The disciple must be equally worthy to seek refuge in his guru. He who so qualifies himself, finds the guru. The disciple should then assign all his problems to the guru's charge, turning himself into a temple of faith, humility and service.

Saints : Guru Nanak had raised a banner of revolt against pseudo-saints and also against superstitious beliefs in them. But a real saint is termed a *bhakta*, *jogi*, *sannyasi*, *diwana*, *gurmukh*, *rangarata*, *nama-rata*, *mukta*, *jeevan-mukta*, etc. Call him by whatever name you may ; a rose will still be a rose. So also the saints come to be distinguished not by their labels but by their intrinsic spiritual characteristics. A saint has God alone as his engrossing object. He has realized his oneness with the universe and his identity with God. The dual role qualifies him to rest in both, gracefully and greatfully. He loves all and hates none. God guards him everywhere and in all circumstances, keeping an eternal vigil over him. Smitten with the love of God, the world takes him to be a madman. He is love-filled, love-intoxicated and God-possessed. He is always serene and cheerful, resting in supreme bliss. His body and mind are a kingdom unto him and over them he rules wisely and well. He is ever happy and shows mercy and magnanimity even to those who are inimical to Him. From him, goodness is scattered all around and he is a source of delight to all. He lays his loving hands on those who are weary and distressed.

The Lord of the Universe protects and supports him as He does the entire cosmos. With the mind folded in the heart, he has the vision of world unity. He has crossed the waking state, the dream state, the deep-sleep state and has reached supraconscious state (*turiya*). He has lighted the lamp of love like a beacon blazing in the darkness. Forgetful of the past and unmindful of the future, he lives in the immediate present. He remains unworried and fearless. The individual will has found fulfilment in the Cosmic Will. His thoughts and words are concentrated on God's Name. He seeks none, shuns none. Nevertheless, an earnest aspirant seeks him wherever he is, and, having found him, profits by his association. A saint stands out as a flaming symbol. He endows the aspirant with wisdom, love and devotion.

The Ethical Aspect

Guru Nanak's teachings cover spiritual perspective as well as the ethical. Moral conduct is of the essence for the seeker. Among the vices to be avoided are lust, anger, greed, infatuation, egoism, avarice, jealousy, enmity, fickleness, untruth, indolence, intoxicants and indulgence in sensual pleasures. Self-introspection, self-control, self-surrender, dedication, devotion, truth, universal love, compassion, humility, contentment and moral discipline (purity of the body and the mind) are the virtues enjoined. In order to become virtuous, the seeker should contemplate on *Nam* under the guidance of his guru and in the company of saints. Even the worst sinner can be redeemed through repentance. The reward or punishment is according to his deserts :

Let five be thy prayers,
 The first is truth,
 The second is righteousness,
 The third is compassion,
 The fourth is pure aspiration,
 And the fifth is the glory of God.
 May all these deeds of service,
 Be thy creed, O Brother!

The Sewak : The seeker or the *sikh* must know himself as a servant, or servant of servants. The pursuit of God cannot be combined with the pursuit of sense-pleasures. Consequently, eternal vigilance is the price of self-realization. The seeker has, therefore, to go by the light of dispassion and discrimination in order to be steadfast and self-controlled. He should aim at escaping from the prison of selfhood and not from the body which is the temple of God. Sorrow is the essential feature of life through which God's will has to be perceived. The blazing fire of his guru's *gyan* (knowledge) will burn away his desires. Unperturbed and fearless and eschewing vanity, the seeker moves sustained by his guru. His mind is no longer swayed by the pairs of opposites, and he has transcended the attributes of the three *gunas*. He moves in the direction of truth and love, and practises compassion and forgiveness. The seeker, the saint, the *Satguru* and the Supreme Soul have all become one. There is no longer any distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped.

Guru Nanak stressed the feasibility of a householder attaining the highest spiritual level, if only he were to cultivate the purity of mind, earnestness of purpose, and intense devotion. He should understand the inner meaning of *Nam*, obey the injunction of his guru, rely upon God and visualize the oneness of all. Thus is achieved reconciliation of worldly life with spiritual aims. Motiveless, selfless and disinterested discharge of duties as a householder has the acceptance and approval of the Almighty, because they are performed in a spirit of self-denial and self-surrender. He lives with and acts in the physical world as a witness, as a passing show, as an effect of his previous personality, without any feelings of attachment, agitation, elation or aversion, for he knows that he belongs to no one and no one belongs to him :

And this I have learnt
 That he is true to his faith
 Who loves God and man
 And, serving all, abides in God.

Guru Nanak has cautioned the seeker against dead formalism, meaningless ceremonies and superstitious beliefs. He denounced the dogmas, and rejected the learning that sought only the form but ignored the spirit. Miracles and mythologies and the lore of the learned are all valueless in the realization of spiritual objectives. It is sheer hypocrisy to do

worshipful acts in expectation of worldly rewards. Mere bodily purification without the purity of the heart is absolutely useless. The mind has to be emptied of all its innate desires and filled with devotion. Spiritual stature is judged not from the external mode of behaviour but from the sincerity and earnestness of the inner self. He who worships the Immaculate, will himself become immaculate. He who worships the changing or the decaying, will himself change or decay. Religion consists neither in books nor in theories, nor in learned arguments, nor in logical reasoning. It is 'being' and 'becoming':

Love the saints of every faith and cast off pride,
Remember, the essence of religion is humility and compassion, .
Not the purification or body adorned with good garments,
Not the yogi's garb nor ashes nor the blowing of a horn, .
Not the shaven head nor any tedious rituals,
Not recitations and torturings nor the ascetic way,
But a life of goodness, purity and devotion,
Amidst all the world's cares and temptations.

Grace : Man is the architect of his own destiny, but only in a limited way. God is the final arbiter. The seeker's hope lies in the fact that he is truly devoted to Him. He knows that he will not achieve anything except through His grace. God's response to the seeker's devotion is called grace, a loving gift from Him. God's mercy is available to descend upon all. It is our own waywardness that keeps us debarred from it. Self-surrender is the secret of it. Grace of God is, indeed, the mighty device which illuminates the intellect and breaks the barriers of duality.

Mystical Aspect

Mysticism involves, first the loving contemplation of God; second, a direct or immediate intuitive apprehension of God, and finally the silent and constant enjoyment of God. It is not mental perspicacity but spiritual illumination. It is a vision of the Self by the Self. Mystical experience is not an exercise at the intellectual level, but is a fulfilment at the intuitional level, where a plenitude of finer emotions and impulses, penetrating intelligence, feeling and will, are all transmuted into the love of God, a flaming passion, all-exclusive, all-embracing and all-consuming. Where love is, there God is. He who chooses God is chosen by Him. The duality of devotion and the unity of mystical experience are not self-contradictory. Starting with devotion, the mystic ends in the unitive experience. He attains *mukti*—oneness with Him. In that state, all knots are unravelled and all doubts resolved. The mystic has acquired the knowledge of Reality by identity with It. He experiences calmness and quiescence of mind. He discovers peace and bliss and the supreme joy of enlightenment. Whether quietist or activist, every mystic is a

bhukta (devotee) of the Lord and is of immense value to mankind. With his universalized approach, he looks upon himself, together with every other creature, as forming a single sympathetic cadence in the poem of creation—the united ripples of one ocean, the integrated bodies of the same *Param-Atman*, the unbreakable continuity of one eternal life. He has undergone a unique bodily, mental, moral and metaphysical transformation. The dewdrop has merged into the ocean. Thus losing itself, it has discovered itself, for the ocean itself has entered the dewdrop.

In reverence and humility, I render my homage to the memory of Guru Nanak. The conditions prevalent in our country today are not far different from those obtaining in his time. The disintegrating forces are once again at work and the fissiparous tendencies are in the ascendant, threatening the very fabric of our existence. I hope and pray that this seminar will promote the cause for which Guru Nanak stood and strengthen the message with which he came to our weary world five hundred years ago.

XXXI

ELEMENTS OF SIKH CULTURE

AVTAR SINGH

Every culture is aided or hampered by the philosophical assumptions and views held regarding the value systems by the members of the society. It may, therefore, be necessary to undertake a study of the value system of the Sikhs if we want to understand and appreciate its development properly. A detailed statement on the analysis of the problem, however, is not attempted here. We shall confine ourselves merely to a statement in broad outline of the moral values of the Sikhs.

An examination of the Sikh Scripture, the *Guru Granth*, reveals that the Sikh Gurus (teachers and founders) cherished a humanistic moral standard viewed in a spiritual context. Sikhism agrees with great ethical systems of India as well as with Christianity and Islam in existence, and with the need to improve it. The self has continually to strive to be the ideal self, as a self in its social relationships. The uplift has to be of the whole self. The realization ought to be by consciously choosing actions in terms of their conduciveness to the ideal. And again, this realization, when attained, is to be reflected in one's actions.

The realized self is termed *sachiara* by Guru Nanak. It is patterned according to the nature of the Absolute or the Real. The Ideal Self or the Real Self is described somewhat differently in Sikhism from other religious and philosophical traditions of India. Guru Nanak calls it Activity (*Karta*). Every person ought to reflect this *Karta* in his activity. The path of moral perfection as well as of spiritual realization lies in and through actions. Guru Nanak says that a thing is judged by its activity (*karmi karmi hoe vichar*).

A question may be asked whether Guru Nanak has given a list of definite actions or duties which will lead everyone to his goal. In reply we may submit that persons are born in different socio-geographical environment, and they take up different vocations and live in different family groups. This fact indicates a vast expanse of possibilities in terms of life-situations. Now, it should be conceded that if one is to compile a detailed list of duties, which would cater to all the life-situations, the list, so prepared, apart from remaining incomplete, may also contain difficulties and problems associated with casuistry.

It is perhaps these factors which led Guru Nanak to lay down a general principle which could be applicable to all life-situations. The general principle laid down by Guru Nanak enjoins that "whatever be the duties demanded by one's station, they ought to be performed to the best of one's ability till one takes up the next or has a different station; then he should perform duties of that station." This notion of the duty of the stations is laid down in Sikhism by the tenet of *raza*.

In Sikhism, *raza* does not mean a passive surrender to the Universal Will. According to Guru Nanak, it is an active appropriation of the Universal Will as integral to the self. While applying this principle of *raza*, one should remember that the socio-economic context of the householder is alone accorded merit in Sikhism. Sikhism does not permit renunciation or abandonment of social involvement. Further, it is necessary to note that one should not confuse the stations mentioned in Sikhism with any principle of social division on the basis of castes or classes, since such a religion does not accord any *locus standi* to such distinctions.

It is sometimes seen that a person who performs his duties faithfully and carefully becomes proud of his flawless performance of them. This self-conceit, in course of time, results in his alienation from the social environment and creates unbounded egoism. This leads to stagnation and checks his further spiritual and moral growth. In order to exclude such a possibility from the path of a seeker, Guru Nanak stresses that spiritual realization is not obtained by work alone; on the other hand, God's grace is also simultaneously needed to make it spiritually effective. This provision of grace determines the spirit with which activity in respect of self-realization is to be pursued. Nevertheless, the stress on the necessity of moral actions for self-realization brings into broad relief the importance of moral values in Sikhism.

The objectivity of these moral values is ensured by grounding them in the Absolute, but they are to be realized subjectively by the pursuer by adopting them in his conduct.

Sikhism stresses the need to practise some of the basic virtues in virtuous life. According to Guru Nanak, "devotion without virtues is impossible." We find very frequent stress on wisdom, truthfulness, temperance, justice, courage, humility and contentment as traits of an ideal conduct. It may, however, be noted that the virtues mentioned above should be practised by all. Sikhism does not accept the theory of specialized virtues—virtues exclusive to certain castes. In this sense, Sikhism is closer to the general Western notion of virtues and is different from the Hindu view of specialized virtues.

Guru Nanak stresses also the virtue of fearlessness and describes the ideal self as fearless. Therefore it is an ideal for everyone to be fearless and courageous. Similarly, wisdom is an ideal for everyone and is not a specialized virtue for any particular caste or class.

In the social sphere, Guru Nanak asserts that the rights of each person

are inviolable. The infringement of the rights of others is as heinous a sin as the "eating of pork by the Muslims and that of beef by the Hindus." The indignation due to the infringement of the rights of others is well explicated by Guru Nanak by using the above analogy. It is historical fact that this respect for the rights of the others is only characteristic of a highly progressive and cultured society.

Although Guru Nanak does not give a comprehensive list of the human rights, we may infer a few of them from a careful study of his life and teachings. One of the important rights, which is central to the Guru's social philosophy, refers to the freedom of the individual. The right to differ is a fundamental aspect of the freedom of the individual. It is also the mainspring of creativity, national or even humanitarian interests. In a misunderstood sense alone can democracy be interpreted as the right of the majority to dictate to others to toe the line. The right of an enlightened individual to differ and command respect for his differences is an inalienable part of his personal right. This, however, is different from any sacrifice which a person willingly makes for his family, community, nation or humanity at large. The individual freedom is a necessary factor in the development of any culture. In this lies the strength or the weakness of any society.

The rights also entail duties. The dictum of Guru Nanak regarding the respect for the rights of others is basically a command to safeguard one's right, and, if necessary, fight for the rights of others. The history of Sikhism is the portrayal of such a struggle for the rights of others. Sikhism, however, is not merely a sort of social reform corps which only fights for the protection of other faiths. It also envisages the fight of the individual for his own freedom. These two are inseparable parts of his own rights. A person who cannot defend his own rights will not be able to defend the rights of others after some time. This fight, however, is not to feed his sense of separate individuality but to sustain a just social order. A continual vigilance and struggle for the rights of others as well as of one's own are a necessary exercise for the maintenance of proper social health and culture.

We may now sum up the main features of the social philosophy and culture of the Sikhs. We have seen that Sikhism stresses the cultivation of the human self both from its empirical and spiritual aspects. In this context, it is pointed out by Guru Nanak that a thing is known by its actions. Thus activity and creativity become the determining factor. The mainspring of the Sikh culture lies in the dictum of Guru Nanak that whatever duties are imposed by one's station, they ought to be performed to the best of one's ability. Everyone should ceaselessly struggle for improvement. The Sikh culture is sought to be strengthened by sanctifying the social order. Sikhism also seems to give a broadbase to the culture by laying down that all the virtues should be cultivated by all the persons. In the sphere of personal rights, Guru Nanak is categorical

about their inviolability. Any culture which does not guard the rights of its members indicates a lower level of development and is deemed to disappear in the long run. The freedom of an individual plays an important part in the cultural philosophy of the Sikhs.

In the end we may add that the Sikh culture lays a high premium on courage and fearlessness. Thus are founded the bases for physical, mental and spiritual culture of the Sikhs.

XXXII

GURU NANAK AND CEYLON

SADDHAMANGALA KARUNARATNA

The following information has been gathered from a passage in the Sanskrit language scribbled in very small characters in the original writing on a slab, now preserved in the Archaeological Museum at Anuradhapura (Number in Museum Register: M 111). The passage, it is said, has been written on the orders of King Dharmaparakramabahu who came to the throne in 1493 A.D.

In the fifteenth year of King Parakramabahu (i.e. Dharmaparakramabahu IX), a religious teacher named Jnanakacarya is said to have come to Jayavardhana from a village in the vicinity of Smantapattana (Samman-turai). He met the King, expounded his doctrine to Parakramabahu and requested that monarch to embrace it. Dharmaparakramabahu promised to embrace Jnanakacarya's creed, if the latter defeated in debate Dharmakirti-sthavira who was the Sangharaja or Sangharaja-designate.

A public discussion was held in the pavilion in front of the royal palace and the debate between the Buddhist hierarch and the religious teacher from abroad was conducted on the subject of a Supreme Personal Deity and the eternal soul. It is said that Jnanakacarya was able to silence Dharmakirti-sthavira. It is said that the Brahmins who were very powerful at the court did not like Dharmakirti-sthavira and desired to have him disgraced and banished from the capital. They also were in agreement with the religious teacher from abroad on the topics discussed. The outcome of public debates of this nature held at Jayavardhanapura was decided by a majority of the votes of those who formed the audience. The Brahmins, therefore, saw to it that there were in the hall a majority of people who would vote in favour of Jnanakacarya.

After obtaining this victory, Jnanakacarya saw the King and having informed that he had defeated Dharmakirti-sthavira requested the King to keep his promise. The King replied that he would inquire about the result of the debate from the authority concerned and give a reply later.

In the meantime, the Brahmins had come to know that Jnanakacarya insisted on his creed in the acceptance of monotheism and that he was against image-worship. These doctrines were not to the liking of the Brahmins. But what the Brahmins were mostly concerned was the

attitude of Jnanakacarya against the supremacy of the Brahmins in a society divided into castes. They, therefore, became anxious about this position in the event of the King embracing the creed of this new religious teacher.

In this predicament, they enlisted the support of Dharmadhvaja-pandita who had been a *bhiksu* and had a good knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali languages as well as of the doctrines of Buddhism and Brahmanism. At the request of the Brahmins, Dharmadhvaja-pandita (who by the way was the father of the poet Alagiyavanna) saw Jnanakacarya and challenged the latter to a debate with him. Jnanakacarya accepted the challenge and arrangements were made for another public debate in the pavilion in front of the Sumangala Prasada (the Royal Palace at Kotte).

The Brahmins on this occasion saw to it that the majority of the people assembled in the *Mandapa* to listen to the dispute were favourably disposed towards Dharmadhvaja-pandita who was himself a much more adroit and well-informed debater than Dharmakirti-sthavira. The subjects taken for debate were image-worship and the pretensions of the Brahmins. At the end of the debate the votes were taken by secret ballot of those assembled and the outcome was declared by the President as a victory for Dharmadhvaja-pandita. After this Jnanakacarya left Jayavardhanapura and the promise given by Dharmaparakramabahu became invalid. Dharmakirti-sthavira also left Jayavardhanapura and lived at his temple at Gadaladeniya. The Brahmins thus made good use of the visit of Jnanakacarya to get rid of the Buddhist hierarch and by forcing Jnanakacarya himself to leave the capital to make their position at court invulnerable.

I am indebted to Dr S. Paranavitana, the retired Archaeological Commissioner of Ceylon for this information. My interest in Guru Nanak was kindled by the visit of Dr Kirpal Singh of the Punjabi University, Patiala, who visited Ceylon last year. I had the privilege of accompanying him on his tour of Ceylon and this new information has been obtained because of his keen interest.

XXXIII

GURU NANAK AND HIS NINE SUCCESSORS

SHER SINGH SHER

"Sikh" means a disciple or learner. His preceptor or teacher is called *guru* or enlightner. Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak (A.D. 1469-1539). He was born in the small village of Talwandi, now called Nankana Sahib, in the District of Sheikhupura (West Pakistan). The name of his father was Mehta Kalu Chand, a Bedi Khatri, and that of his mother, Tripta Devi. Mehta Kalu worked as the village accountant (*patwari*) in the service of the village noble named Rai Bular, a convert to Islam and a scion of the Rajput dynasty of the Bhattis. Although Sikhism is the youngest of the major religions of mankind, it is interesting from historical, theological and sociological points of view. Everything, great or small, is a direct result of its historical, socio-economic, religio-political and cultural *milieu*. Most of the historians and theologians have said that Sikhism and Sikhs are the product of the religious and political persecution by the Mughal rulers of India. True, as it is, I will add to it by saying that it is equally the outcome of the socio-religious conditions and the suppression of the common people or working communities of India by Brahmanical Hinduism. An attempt is made here to briefly survey the circumstances under which Guru Nanak founded Sikhism and under which his nine successors lighted the lamp of their faith, generation after generation.

The Muslim invaders began their incursions on Sind and the Punjab more than seven centuries before the birth of Guru Nanak. The Hindus, in spite of their being in millions in India, were so much divided and demoralized that they could not effectively resist the invading armies. The social organization of the Hindus and their various beliefs and practices are stated by Williams¹, Noss², Hoult³, Rose⁴, Elphinstone⁵, Raman⁶, Dubois⁷, Clarke⁸, Frost⁹, Champion¹⁰, and Sen¹¹. The account of their social evils and religious perversions is given by Sleeman¹², Rose¹³, Harvey¹⁴, Dubois¹⁵, Boulger¹⁶, Gayer¹⁷, Walish¹⁸, Thornton¹⁹, Taylor²⁰, Bernier²¹, and Tavernier²².

We may briefly relate the history of the Mughals' treatment of the Hindus. Babar was the first Mughal invader who attacked India with the determination of capturing it and permanently settling in this country.

He was a very staunch Muslim. He introduced the payment of the stamp-duty by the Hindus only. He ordered the demolition of the Hindu temples at Sambhal, Chanderi, Ayudhya, and of the Jain idols at Urva near Gwalior. Humayun, the son and successor of Babar, did not get enough time to develop his father's religious policy. It is also said that he was not an intolerant and orthodox Muslim. After Humayun, Sher Shah Suri, ruled India. He converted a Hindu temple at Jodhpur into a mosque and the *Tarikh-i-Daoodi* says that he attacked Maldev with a religious motive. Even Akbar, the Mughal ruler, known to be a liberal and tolerant person, was a staunch Muslim in the beginning of his rule. He earned the title of Ghazi by beheading Hemu, a Hindu courtier. Jehangir also restricted the religious liberty of the Hindus from the very beginning of his coming to power. He forcibly converted the son of Rana Sangram, a Hindu Gosain and some Hindu prisoners. Although Shahjahan was relatively a liberal, he restricted the entry of the Hindus into public service. Aurangzeb, the son of Shahjahan, was the most orthodox Sunni who ever ruled over India. He did not have any sympathy for the Hindus. His own brother Dara was condemned to death on the verdict of the Muslim theologians (who were invited by Aurangzeb), because they declared him to be an apostate. He ordered the death of many Sufi faqirs and the Muslims of the Shia sect. The suicide of Sayyad Shahji, another young man, Qamar's execution for writing a book of Christian inclination, and the beheading of a Sufi faqir named Sarmad are well-known instances of religious cruelty in Indian history. A Portuguese, Diwan Mahammad Tahir, Ali Sirhindi and Hussain Malik were also executed for apostasy. The historical works like *Kulimat-i-Tayyabad*, *Ma-asir-i-Alamgiri* and *Muntkhab-ul Lubab* tell that the State employment of the Hindus was forbidden. He also ordered that the Hindu officers must employ Muslim servants. His campaign against the Hindu temples began with his orders, dated 28th February, 1659, and it is not possible to list all the temples which were destroyed. The temples at Mathura and Benaras were his special targets. *Jizya* (tax) was imposed on the non-Muslim subjects. The Hindus agitated against *Jizya*, but they were mercilessly trampled down by the elephants of the procession of Aurangzeb. Thus the stir against *Jizya* was stilled. The antagonism between the Muslims and the Hindus sapped the vigour of the Indian people.

The birth and growth of Sikhism took place under such a religio-political condition of the Hindus and the Sikh Gurus and their followers were faced with this difficult situation.

The beginning and the end of the religious persecution by the Mughal rulers in India coincided with the advent and the end of the Guru period of the Sikh history. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, met Babar, the first Mughal ruler, at Eminabad, in the District of Gujranwala (West Pakistan). Guru Nanak saw Babar's tyranny and spoke eloquently and

inspiringly against him, as recorded in his hymns called *Babarvani* (The hymns about Babar). He challenged the Hindu caste-system and composed hymns of very high poetical and spiritual merit. He loved the downtrodden, calling them *bhai* (brother). Guru Nanak rejected the observance of Hindu rituals. He visited different countries, met the people of different religions, castes and cultures and gave them the message of human unity, love and monotheistic belief. He declared in the very beginning of his mission that the basic object of his faith was to realize the truth. Yogis (Siddhas) escaped the miserable society as defeatists. He admonished the Hindu ascetics for neglecting their duty and wasting their lives in forests, instead of fighting against the evils and the ire of the evil-doers. He clearly exposed evils of his times such as the corrupt practices of *qazis* (judges), the ignorance of the common people and the hypocrisy of religious leaders. He upheld the social status of women. He said that sweet speech and humility were the essence of human attributes. He told the Muslims that physical cleanliness was meaningless if their thoughts and actions remained impure. He advised the people to earn their livelihood by honest and hard labour. He reformed and uplifted persons like Sajjan, the thug, Bhoomia, the thief, and Kauda, the cannibal. He preached in the language of the common people. He ennobled his followers by the establishment of *gurdwaras*, the institution of *langar* (kitchen), the usage of the word *bhai* (brother) for all human beings. He gave the appellation Sikh to his disciples. He lived for seventy years, out of which he passed thirty in domestic life, twenty-two in travels in India and abroad, and the last eighteen at Kartarpur as a practical farmer, serving the people and spreading his message of the unity of God and the fraternity of mankind. He infused the spirit of service and sacrifice into his followers. He had two sons but neither could pass the tests to succeed him. Bhai Lehna was chosen as his successor and was renamed Guru Angad (the limb of the Guru). Guru Nanak died in 1539 at Kartarpur, now in the District of Sialkot (West Pakistan). He became such a symbol of love for both the Hindus and the Muslim sections of the populace that they quarrelled over the disposal of his corpse, as each of them claimed him to be its own. This tribute of non-sectarian human love for Guru Nanak is a unique instance in the religious history of man.

Guru Angad (A.D. 1504-52) met Guru Nanak at Kartarpur. His contact with the Guru transformed his life and he became his disciple. He developed the institution of *langar*, and made the Gurmukhi script more prevalent and popular. He emphasized the physical fitness of his followers, which afterwards culminated in the martial development of the Sikhs. He died at Khadoor Sahib in 1552 after nominating Guru Amar Dass (1479-1574) as his successor.

Guru Amar Dass became the Guru at seventy-three. He paid special attention to the spread of Sikhism for which he established 22 dioceses

(*manjis*) in different parts of India, each in the charge of a missionary called *masand*. He established himself at the village of Goindwal where he got dug a *bauli* (a stepped well) which afterwards became a place of pilgrimage. Akbar the Great visited Goindwal and was highly pleased to observe the principles of love and service of the Sikhs. He also took his meal in *Guru ka Langar* (the community kitchen of the Guru), which institution especially appealed to him as a medium of human equality. Guru Amar Dass fixed three festivals—Diwali, Baisakhi and Maghi—to be celebrated as religious fairs, so that the Sikhs might get together from different parts of the country. He discerned the spiritual vision of Bhai Jetha and so nominated him for guruship and called him Ram Dass (1534-1581), the Fourth Guru of the Sikhs. Guru Ram Dass spread Sikhism with great enthusiasm. His great achievements include the foundation of Ramdaspur, now called Amritsar, where the Golden Temple of the Sikhs attracts visitors from all the world over. He nominated his youngest son, Arjan Dev, to be his successor as the Fifth Guru.

Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) became Guru at a young age. He continued the work of the construction of the tank, some other buildings of Ramdaspur and invited Sayyad Mian Mir of Lahore to lay the foundation-stone of the Harmandar (the temple of God). Some writers hold that the word Harmandar means the temple of everyone. The Harmandar or Golden Temple has doors in the four directions in order to instruct the people that God is not confined to a certain direction only. Guru Arjan helped, invited and attracted all sorts of workers to settle at Ramdaspur, which he renamed Amritsar. He sent his Sikhs to Afghanistan, Iran and some other Muslim countries to trade in horses. The profitable trade and visits of his followers to the foreign countries served Sikhism in three ways: (1) the Sikhs became rich, (2) they learnt horse-riding and developed love for good horses, and (3) the message of Sikhism reached foreign lands where many people became the followers of their religion. He also introduced the practice of contributing one-tenth of one's income for the support of the community kitchen, where minstrels, visitors and other Sikhs stayed during their visit to the Guru. Arjan Dev was a lover of art and encouraged various arts among his Sikhs. He was a great poet and a scholar of very high merit. He collected the writings of the preceding Gurus, the hymns of the *bhagats* of different castes, creeds and parts of India. He composed hymns and dictated them to Bhai Gurdas. He compiled the *Guru Granth* (Scripture of the Sikhs) and installed it in the Harmandar in 1604. Besides containing the teachings of the Gurus, the *Guru Granth* also contains the writings of the saints of different castes, including sudras. This was a revolutionary challenge to the Hindus whose scriptures and their reading or hearing were a taboo to the people of the lower castes. Guru Arjan Dev held that the message of God was common to all the four castes. Some Muhammadans also became his devotees. The friendship

of Sayyad Mian Mir was an eyesore to the Muslim zealots, including Jehangir who was incited by the enemies of the Guru that he was creating a new religious sect and gaining political power. Jehangir was also annoyed when he learnt that the Guru had helped his rebellious, but refugee, son Khusró. The result was that the Guru was sent for to negotiate about the matters in question. The Guru went to Lahore where he would not budge an inch from his decision. Jehangir offered to release him on the payment of a huge fine. But the Guru refused to pay the penalty, saying that he had not committed any offence against the society or the State. So he was tortured to death. He died at Lahore on the 30th May, 1606. History has recorded his unsurpassed patience, fortitude and unshakeable belief in the Will of God. While sitting on the red-hot iron sheet, he recited, "O my Lord, Thy Will is sweet to me." Guru Arjan Dev did a great service to Sikhism by preparing their religious Scripture, by the construction of the Golden Temple, and by inculcating in the Sikhs the spirit of service, and dignity of labour, economic and commercial enterprise, love for horses, the contribution of *daswandh*, by teaching equality and unity of all human beings, by including the hymns of the saints of the sudra community in the *Guru Granth* and by sowing the seed of martyrdom which largely flourished after him and became the heritage of the Sikhs.

Guru Har Gobind (1595-1644), the only son of the Fifth Guru, succeeded him in 1606. Guru Arjan Dev had advised his son to maintain troops, keep good horses and arms. Guru Har Gobind began his guruship with one sword on his right side and the other on the left, as the symbols of *meeri* (temporal power) and *peeri* (spiritual power). He kept regular soldiers and developed horse-riding among them, as willed by his father. Jehangir became jealous of him and forced three battles on him in which the Mughal forces suffered great reverses. He encouraged physical feats of warfare, jumping, wrestling, weight-lifting and archery among the Sikhs. He introduced the singing of the deeds of the brave heroes of the past before the Sikh congregation. He died in 1644 and was succeeded by his grandson Har Rai (1630-1661), who became the Guru at the age of 14. He was a compassionate and peace-loving person. He urged the Sikhs to meditate on the hymns of the *Guru Granth* and lead a disciplined life.

Har Krishan (1656-1664) was selected at the age of five as the Eighth Guru of the Sikhs. Guru Har Krishan died of smallpox at Delhi in 1664 after directing the Sikhs that their next and Ninth Guru was at Baba Bakala in the District of Amritsar.

Guru Teg Bahadur became the Ninth Guru of the Sikhs. He was a very brave person, having excellent dexterity in the use of the sword. But afterwards he had retired for meditation. On becoming the Guru, he shifted to the place, now called Anandpur Sahib. Guru Teg Bahadur spread Sikhism in India by undertaking long journeys. His wife, Gujarí,

bore him a son at Patna in Bihar on the 22nd December, 1666. He was named Gobind Rai by his father. This name was later changed into Gobind Singh. One day, a group of Kashmiri Pandits led by Pandit Kirpa Ram came in a deputation to Guru Teg Bahadur at Anandpur Sahib and related the atrocities being perpetrated on them by the then Governor of Kashmir. The Guru consoled them and said that some great man would have to sacrifice his life to save the oppressed people. Just at that time, Gobind Rai turned up and enquired of his father the reason for his thoughtful mood and on knowing the reason, he requested him to sacrifice his own life for that sublime cause. The congregation was surprised at the intelligence and courage of the boy of nine. Guru Teg Bahadur was overjoyed at the answer of his son. The Guru advised the deputationists that they should send a petition to Aurangzeb that the Guru would negotiate with him on behalf of the Hindus, and if he could persuade or force him to embrace Islam, all the other Hindus would follow suit. They did as they were advised. The Guru went to Delhi but after discussing the matter with the Muslim theologians and Aurangzeb, he refused to renounce his faith. Aurangzeb demanded that he should work some miracles but he rejected that demand, because it was against the canons of Sikhism. At last, he was beheaded. The Gurdwara of Sis Ganj, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, stands at the place of his martyrdom. Guru Teg Bahadur was the second martyr in the history of Sikhism. This was an epoch-making event for the Sikhs.

Guru Teg Bahadur was a very great scholar and poet and his hymns contained in the *Guru Granth* inspire deep human compassion. His couplets and hymns contained in the *Guru Granth* were added to it by his son, Guru Gobind Singh. The *slokas* by Guru Teg Bahadur are recorded at the end of the *Guru Granth*. In one of the *slokas*, Guru Teg Bahadur has given an everlasting lesson to humanity, and the Sikhs have adopted it as the principle of their respectable survival. The Guru says, *Bhai kahun ko det nainh, na bhai manat ann ; Kaho Nanak sun re manan giani tahey bakhan* (Nanak says: Only he should be described as an enlightened person who neither frightens others nor is he frightened by them).

Guru Gobind Singh became the Guru in 1675 at the age of nine. There is an important aspect of Guru Teg Bahadur's martyrdom. When the Hindus were asked to cremate the body of Guru Teg Bahadur, it was found that they denied to have any connection with him, as apparently there was no difference between the clean-shaven Hindus and the Muslims. So Guru Gobind Singh determined to impart such a form and appearance to his followers as could never make them deny or conceal their identity as Sikhs. At the age of twenty, he became a great warrior, statesman, scholar, saint, speaker and poet. His first victory, won at Paonta Sahib, struck terror into the Rajas of the Punjab hills, who were the hirelings of Aurangzeb and the Muslim rulers. He prepared his Sikhs

to be soldiers and saints at the same time. He organized a literary society in which fifty-two poets worked to compose their original poems and to translate the Hindu epics into the then prevalent language in northern India. He himself also composed poetry which is now included in his *Dasam Granth*. A close study of his life convinces one of his matchless personality which was respected even by his enemies. He founded the *Khalsa* (the pure) on the Baisakhi day of 1699 by baptizing them with *Amrit* (nectar) sanctified with the recitation of five different devotional compositions, namely, the *Jap Sahib*, the *Japji*, the *Chaupai*, the *Sudha Swayye* and the *Anand Sahib*. The water in which sugar was put was continuously stirred and tempered with a double-edged sword (*khanda*). He ordained them to keep the life-long pledge of wearing five things, namely, unshorn hair of the whole body, a comb, a sword (pledged to be used for self-defence and against oppressors and acts of injustice), an iron bracelet, to be always worn (as the fettering symbol to remind of the pledge given to the Guru to do good and to withhold hands from doing evil deeds), and an underwear to give the required agility of a soldier and athlete—being a tight and light dress. He demanded five heads from amongst the congregation which had gathered at Anandpur Sahib as a test of their devotion and fearlessness which were to be the first requisites of the *Khalsa*. Five Sikhs offered themselves to his sword, but they were not beheaded. On the other hand, they were baptized by him and were given the title of *Singh*. Then on his request, they baptized him and he became Gobind Singh from Gobind Rai. It may be noted that all of them belonged to different castes but were made to drink the nectar from the same bowl of steel. After that, they were advised to behave like brothers towards one another. It is well to remember that the *Khalsa* was not against any one community. A well-known Muslim scholar³³ has written that Guru Gobind Singh was not against the Muslims, but was certainly opposed to evil and evil-doers. Some noble and noted Muslims were very close to him and received immeasurable love and kindness from him. Guru Gobind Singh declared the primary purpose of his life, saying:

Let all the virtuous be informed
That I was born for this purpose:
To uphold the righteous,
To deliver the good and
To uproot the evil-doers.³⁴

He transformed the weak Hindus and awakened self-respect and patriotism among them. He forbade his followers to use intoxicants and asked them to give up other anti-religious, and anti-social practices. He commanded his followers to give up their belief in Hindu scriptures, gods, and ceremonies. In short, he exhorted them to worship and believe in only one *Akal*, the Timeless God. Basically, his efforts were against the

Hindu caste-system and cowardice. The way of the baptism of the *Khalsa* is a wonderful means of unifying men of all classes, castes and cultures. It is noteworthy that these neophytes of humble origin won many battles against the allied forces of the Hindu Rajput Rajas and Aurangzeb.

All the aspirations and ideals of the nine preceding Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Teg Bahadur were carefully concluded, practised, invested and established by Guru Gobind Singh in the form of the *Khalsa Panth*.

Guru Gobind Singh died at the age of 42 at Nanded. He installed the *Guru Granth* as the spiritual Guru of the Sikhs and advised his follower, Banda Singh Bahadur, to go to the Punjab to organize the Sikh army and continue the struggle against the oppressors. Banda Singh Bahadur acted upon the advice and inspiration of the Guru and fought against the opposing armies. The twelve independent Sikh confederacies came into being during this period and in 1799, that is one hundred years after the foundation of the *Khalsa*, Maharaja Ranjit Singh established the Sikh empire with its frontiers extending up to Tibet in the north, Sind in the south, the Jamuna in the east and the Khyber Pass and Jamraud in the west. His rule is known for its secularism and prosperity. He died in 1839, but after him divisive tendencies and selfishness of some people tarnished and undid the political glory of the Sikhs, who were defeated because of the treachery of their leaders and commanders. However, the gallantry of the Sikhs impressed the British Commander-in-Chief who wrote to Queen Victoria of England "on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe (Sikhs) or to record the acts of heroism displayed not only individually, but collectively of the Sikh Sardars and the army...Certain it is that it would have been a different story to tell if the body of men had not been commanded by traitors."²⁵ The greatest achievement of Ranjit Singh, his spirited Sikh soldiers and brave generals, such as Hari Singh Nalwa, was that they stopped the foreign invaders from the west who used to raid India to plunder and conquer it.

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XXXIV

THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS

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Five hundred years after the birth of Guru Nanak is an appropriate time to look at the religious situation in the world then and now, and to consider in the light of our history some of the issues to be faced in the next half century by those who are committed to the religious way of life.

Politically, during the lifetime of the First Guru, the known world was as disturbed as usual, particularly so in north-west India where Babar was fighting to establish and expand his rule, even holding Guru Nanak as a slave for a time, and where, after Babar, Humayun made his first, and unsuccessful, attempt to regain the control of the Mughal Empire. This was the time of the first European expansion into Asia, led by the Portuguese who came first to Goa, then invaded Ceylon in 1505, then on to Thailand, Malaysia, and even to China and Japan. In Burma, during the Guru's lifetime, the Buddhists were persecuted by Thohanbwa, the Shan King. In Thailand, it was the time of the ascendancy of Ayuthia and the war with Burma over the control of Chengmai. The Annamites, now known as the Vietnamese, had recently become free from the Chinese, and during the lifetime of Guru Nanak they had four coups, and launched an expansionist policy which led to the invasion of what is now Cambodia, the destruction of the Champa government, the slaughter of some 60,000 Chams, and the enslavement of 30,000 Cham captives. In Malaysia, Malacca was at the height of its power and the Muslim traders were expanding rapidly through Malaysia and Indonesia. Tibet, at the time, was independent of the Ming dynasty, ruled by the Rimpung family. It was a time of corrupt government in China with eunuchs wielding power and warlords and bandits competing for provincial control. In Japan, there was political anarchy with bands of monks fighting one another.

To the west of India, Shah Isma'il, the Shia ruler of Persia, was strengthening his hold and persecuting his Sunni opposition. Egypt and Syria, under the last of the Burji Mamluks, were conquered by the Ottoman Turks led by Bayazid II and Sulayman I. In Italy, it was the time of Cesar Borgia and the Medicis, and Pope Julius II was leading

his armies against the French. Ferdinand and Isabella ruled Spain, and in 1492 when Guru Nanak was twenty-three, Columbus discovered America.

So much for the political scene. In the years from 1469 to 1539, there were many significant things happening in the religious communities of the world, though it is not likely that there were religious scholars seeking a worldwide perspective on the religious happenings of their time.

In India, during the lifetime of Guru Nanak, the tensions between Islam and Hinduism were made intenser by the political and military rivalries between the Hindu and the Muslim rulers. In Goa, and the neighbouring areas, the Portuguese Christians were persecuting the Muslims, and the persecution later extended to the Hindus. At the same time, there was a strong Sufi movement among the Muslims, and Sufis could communicate somewhat more easily with *Bhaktas* among the Hindus. Chaitanya, who died in 1533, and Vallabha, who died in 1531, with their emphasis on devotion for Lord Krishna, gave great impetus to the Bhakti movement during the lifetime of Guru Nanak. The Jains and the Buddhists were also influential in the religious thought of northern India, at least as heresies to be refuted by Hindu and Muslim scholars.

In Ceylon, the Theravada Buddhists found themselves threatened by the aggressive opposition of the Portuguese Christians. In southern Burma, the Bhikkhu-ruler Dhammaceti was establishing Theravada Buddhism; and in northern Burma, the Buddhist religious writings were being published in the vernacular for the first time. (The emphasis on the use of the vernacular in teaching religion was paralleled in the teaching of Guru Nanak, and in the Bhakti and Sufi movements in India.) In Thailand, it was a period of great Buddhist artistic activity, and of searching discussions about the identity of Hinduism and Buddhism. In Viet Nam, the government was repressing Buddhism, forcing monks from the monasteries and forbidding the building of temples; it was syncretistic time in Viet Nam, blending animism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. In Tibet, it was a time of vitality and growth in Buddhism; the great Gelugpa monastery at Tashilunpe was founded, and the Lama who was later recognized as the first Dalai Lama headed the Gelugpa sect. Had Guru Nanak's journeys taken him to China, he would have found little new happening in Buddhist thought, but there was a tendency for the different schools to draw closer together; he would have heard of Buddhist monks being beaten for protesting against political corruption; he would have been there while Wang Yang-min was doing so much to revive Confucianism, and would have had an opportunity to talk with Taoist and Muslim religious leaders. In Japan, he would have found it a dark age for Buddhism, with violence erupting between rival factions of monks, but also a time of reform and revival in Shinshu under the wandering teacher, Rennyo Shoni.

During these years, Islam was spreading rapidly in Malaysia and Indonesia supplanting Hinduism and Buddhism in the commercial centres and spreading to the countryside. In the west of the Punjab, the Shi'as of Persia were gaining full control, driving out or converting the Sunnis in their midst, while further west the extension of the Turkish power supported the Sunnis; much of the vitality in Islam at that time was found among the Sufis.

In the Christian world of Europe, during the lifetime of the First Guru, the renaissance was challenging accepted religious patterns of thought. Copernicus was a contemporary; Savonarola died when Guru Nanak was twenty-nine; Erasmus was born three years before the son was born to Kalu and Tripta in the village of Talwandi; Luther died seven years after the First Guru completed his mission. It was also the time of the Spanish inquisition under Ferdinand and Isabella.

The traditions record that Guru Nanak travelled in the Himalayas, through much of India, to Ceylon, and as far west as Mecca, discussing religious problems with Vedantists, Sufis, Sunnis, Shi'as, Buddhists, and Jains. It is tempting to speculate what might have happened if he had also talked with Luther, Erasmus, Savonarola, and some of the inquisitors, and with the Confucian Wang Yang-min, with Ch'an and Zen masters, and Rennyo Shoni, the Shinshu reformer, and had spent some time in Indonesia where Islam was supplanting Hinduism and Buddhism. He would probably have returned to his village and reported that almost everywhere he found political instability with much persecution of religious leaders. He would have told of a widespread tendency to bring religious teaching to the common people, of how Luther was translating his scriptures into the vernacular, preaching in the language of the common man, and writing hymns for his people to sing in worship; and at the other end of the world Shinshu and Nichiren Buddhism were lay movements, using the common language of the people. He would probably also have pointed out that there was a strong undercurrent of devotional life among the people he visited, similar to what he had found among the *Bhaktas* and Sufis: the pietists in Germany with their *Theologia Germanica* which influenced Luther, and the Anabaptists there; the Buddhists in China and Japan who were devoted to their *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*, and the followers of Amitabha Buddhism; in Indonesia he would have noted the blending of Sufism and Bhakti.

Be that as it may, the First Guru returned from his wanderings to northern India and there set forth the religious teachings which have been cherished and followed by millions of Sikhs during the last five hundred years. According to his teachings, there is one God, the Master, the Truth, the Creator, whose will encompasses all beings, whose law, which supports the earth, is born of compassion. "Great is the Lord, great His name; what He ordains comes to be" (the *Japji*). God is known to those who hearken to the Guru's word, who follow the

righteous path, who have no ego, no pride. The Sikh is one who repeats God's name, seeks the company of holy men, is absolutely truthful, lives in contentment, and keeps his senses in restraint. (It is not our intention here to summarize the doctrines of the Sikhs, but only to suggest by these ideas drawn from the *Japji* and the Kurukshetra sermon something of the nature of the teachings of the First Guru.) Guru Nanak taught and wrote in the vernacular, scorning the use of Sanskrit or Arabic, because they were not understood by the ordinary people; he admired both Hindu and Sufi teachers and freely used both Muslim and Hindu sources; he placed great emphasis on the devotional life, the inner life, the spirit, stressing the importance of repeating the Name, chanting, singing, and praying. By teaching and example, and by instituting the common meal, he sought to persuade his followers to consider all men equal before God, and that the divine compassion should be reflected in relations among men.

And now it is five hundred years since the birth of Guru Nanak. The story of what happened during those five centuries, what was done by the Sikhs and what was done to them, is told elsewhere. After five hundred years, how does the religious situation around the world in 1969 compare with that in 1469?

The times are still politically disturbed, as they have been for most of the past five centuries. There is fighting again at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, as there was in the time of Guru Nanak. It is twenty-five years since the Europeans have been fighting among themselves, but extensive military forces are held in readiness in Europe, and another arms race is in progress. Russia has become the Soviet Union and a world military power. China once more is closed to most of the world while it struggles with its internal revolution. The monks are not fighting on the streets of Japan, but the students are. Viet Nam is again going through a quarter of a century of war, but this time a new factor has been added, not the Chinese, nor the Portuguese, but the hordes from that new country discovered in 1492 by Columbus. The Indonesians have just come through a revolution in which some hundreds of thousands were killed. War is threatening again in the land of the Cham, the Thai, and the Shan. During these five centuries, the Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Taoists, Confucianists, and Parsees have told us that men should live together in love and compassion and in peace. The wars and violence continue.

The most obvious changes in society in the past five hundred years are in the area of science and technology, particularly evident in the new speed of transportation and communication. Now, when a religious writer refers to the known world, it must include the whole world, not just the familiar, nearby areas. Provincialism in religion is threatened.

Other new factors affecting religious communities, new since the time

of the First Guru, are the great increase in population, the increase of nationalistic fervour around the world, the rise and decline of European colonialism in Asia which left wounds not yet healed, the rise of new centres of political power in the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, and the spread of a new ideology, communism, which does not consider itself religious but seeks to supplant religious beliefs and practices. Religious groups today must speak to these new external conditions.

It is not easy to characterize the religious situation in 1969. It is as difficult today as it was five hundred years ago to make any meaningful generalizations about Hinduism. Religion in India is responding to new conditions, of course, and there are tensions between the traditionalist Hindus and those who call for change in religious practices and statements of belief. Caste is both attacked and defended on religious grounds; in the face of nationalistic pressures, regional defensiveness often takes on a religious aura; there has been little building of temples, or creation of new works of religious art in recent times; one who would know the popular trends in recent Hinduism should know the Ramakrishna Mission, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharishi, Gandhi, Tagore, the Arya Samaj, the Satsangi. A long list of such random comments about Hinduism could be made, but the sum total allows no overall characterization of Hinduism today. Hinduism is vital that it determines the pattern of life of hundreds of millions of people, the *bhakti* is still there, as in the time of Guru Nanak, and also the *jnana* and the *karma yogi*. There is much that Guru Nanak would recognize.

When an attempt is made to characterize Islam today, it must be remembered that, except for Turkey, almost all of the Islamic world has gained freedom from external European colonial control within the present generation and is still struggling with the problems of social organization and government. Only in the Soviet Union and China do the Muslims face the possibility of exterminations; in India, South-East Asia, Europe, and some areas of Africa there is little chance that the Muslims will have a majority to control the government, so they must adjust to a permanent minority status, but the rest of the Muslim world is faced with the problem of creating an Islamic government and society under modern conditions. In Islam, as in Hinduism, the great tension is between the traditional religious position that endured and defended itself for centuries, and the call of a new generation for a statement of Islamic faith, and a pattern of Islamic life, that challenges men to the best they can offer in a free, changing society. In Morocco, the *ulema* have just begun to feel free to get in touch with the *ulema* of other countries; In Al Azhar, the first major curriculum revision since some centuries past has recently been made; in Turkey they are experimenting with a secularization of government, and in the process are discovering much more vitality in Islam than was expected;

the Shi'as of Iran are beginning to communicate with Sunnis and the non-Muslims with a new openness; in Pakistan, earnest efforts have been made to create a modern, scholarly leadership in Islam, but political developments have discouraged such activities; in India, the Muslims hope that they will be free to live as followers of Islam without discrimination; in Indonesia, the Muslims were deeply involved in the recent revolution; they are not sure what their role should be in the government; they still face the problem of adjusting to the religious heritage of ancient times including the remnants of Hinduism and Buddhism, and feel the pressure to adapt to the changes of the last century.

In the Islamic world, the emphasis on tradition has continued for the past five hundred years. The tradition is now being challenged.

Theravada Buddhism has not changed significantly since the time of Guru Nanak. The move towards more popular representation in government has in recent years involved the Sangha in politics in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia, but generally the *bhikkhus* have tried to avoid either using political power, or being used by the politicians. They like to advise and to have their advice followed, but prefer not to be involved. There is a new vitality in the Buddhism of the Theravada countries, but it is too early to tell whether this is a temporary phenomenon. In Viet Nam, where both Theravada and Mahayana live together, the pressures of a prolonged war and of ideological conflict have aroused the Buddhists to new social concerns and have brought Theravada and Mahayana closer together than in any other Buddhist land. The Buddhists there are still basically Thien and Tinh Do, as they were in the days of the First Guru, and although there is evidence of a new vitality, they tend to remain divided more along lines of northern, central, and southern cultural patterns than on matters of doctrine.

The Tibetan Buddhists, having lived in isolation for most of the past five centuries, now face extermination as Buddhists, except for the few thousand who have escaped to India and are now struggling with the problem of maintaining and transmitting their beliefs when they live as a minority religious group—a problem similar to that faced by the Ismailis, and by the Jews outside Israel. And what of the Buddhists in China? Will Buddhism there go underground and come back with new strength, or is it the end of Buddhism in China? It is too early to tell.

The greatest changes in Buddhism in the past century have come in Japan with a renaissance in scholarship, with several new sects growing rapidly in recent years, and with a vigorous confrontation with scientific thought, historical methodology, and Communist ideology.

Judaism, which was dispersed throughout Europe, America, and Asia, and lost several million followers in racial and religious persecution in our lifetime, is now seeking to build a homeland—providing another interesting example of the problem of building up a religious community

associated with a particular geographic location, and of creating a government on religious principles. Judaism has maintained its strong support of scholarship during all its trials.

The Protestant Christianity, which was just starting in the time of Guru Nanak, has now been established for some centuries in Europe and North America, generally favouring the separation of the Church and the State, still divided into many sects, and tending to take on the cultural patterns of the communities where it has settled. Protestantism has encouraged an increasing emphasis on scholarship in religious studies for the last century.

Roman Catholicism has long ago given up the inquisition, no longer seeks political control of the governments in countries where it is found, has made impressive progress in religious studies, has in recent years moved towards reconciliation with the orthodox Catholicism and the Protestants, and is now in the midst of the most rapid changes in the past five centuries, shifting to the use of the vernacular and hymns in worship and altering its administrative structure.

The story of the Sikhs during these too frequently troubled five hundred years is well known here. Having come recently through the agonizing experience of partition, Sikhs are now more widely scattered around the world than ever before. They have been discriminated against in Britain, Canada, and the United States; their temple was recently destroyed in Shanghai. They face the problem of maintaining their religion as a minority group in a rapidly changing world.

When we look at the religious situation in the world today in the perspective of the last five hundred years, and when we look ahead to the next fifty years, we see that there are common trends and common problems faced by religious communities everywhere.

One sensitive area of common concern is the ever wider use of historical criticism of religious traditions and religious writings, now increasingly combined with psychological and anthropological studies of religious practices. Such studies are associated with the problem of educating the youth of the religious community, so that they will be committed to the beliefs and the way of life of their fathers.

All religious communities must come to terms with the new methods and new discoveries of the natural science, the new mysticism of the natural world which science is creating, the new confidence that man can control nature and even manipulate human beings with this new methodology. Ancient cosmologies are challenged, divine teleology is questioned. And from science comes the new technology which is changing the lives of our people through radio, television, aeroplanes, computers, and medicines. Health, which has been a religious concern in many parts of the world, is moved to the province of the doctor and the hospital.

All religious communities must also come to terms with the new methods and new discoveries of the social sciences: psychology, sociology,

anthropology, and economics, in particular. The social sciences raise questions concerning the nature of man, the nature of society, and the relations of men and social organizations ; questions that call for an evaluation from the point of view of the religious community particularly because of the tendency of the social scientists to try to avoid value judgements. The social sciences call to our attention the problems of government, poverty, racism, urban and rural community organization, population, and religious rivalries.

A problem, which was urgent at the time of the founding of the Sikh community, has persisted through the years, and is shared by all other religious groups, is that of the relation of the religious community to the government. Must the government be controlled by the religious community, or be responsive to the advice of the religious leaders, or be completely independent ? What of the minority religious community ? What is the responsibility of the religious person, or community, in time of war ? What can the religious communities expect to do to bring peace in the next fifty years ? Is poverty a governmental problem, or a religious problem ?

The religious communities of the world have been particularly criticized for their involvement in racial, nationalistic, and religious rivalries. Sometimes the religious communities have become involved without having given thought to the inconsistency between their actions and their teachings, sometimes the religious leaders have supported and encouraged religious divisiveness. Of all the problems facing the religious communities, this religious divisiveness or religious antagonism is our own making, our own responsibility, and must be overcome by our actions as religious communities. The government may not respond to our wishes, the scientific discoveries may come without our efforts, but the separateness and rivalry within our religious communities and between our religious communities is our own doing. Scholars from all religious communities must contribute all they can to an understanding of the problems raised by the natural sciences, the social sciences, the historical method, by governmental policies, and by social changes, but first of all, religious scholars must use their skills to guide their religious communities towards the kind of understanding that will eliminate religious rivalries and religious distrust.

The time has come for religious scholars to make a determined effort to create a sympathetic understanding among the religious communities of the world. Each of us must make the effort to understand a religious community other than our own as a first step towards breaking down the divisiveness which is the embarrassment of sensitive religious men everywhere. When we have a sympathetic understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of other peoples, and can bring that understanding to our own religious communities, they can no longer be manipulated to serve exploitative or racial, or nationalistic ends.

The Protestant Christian churches which were started during the lifetime of Guru Nanak maintained their separateness from one another and from the Catholic Church for the past five hundred years. Only recently has there been a movement of reconciliation based on a serious attempt to understand the point of view of sects different from their own. They call it the Ecumenical Movement, taking the name from the Greek word *oikoumene*, meaning "the inhabited world." Had they gone back to their Jewish origins, the word might have been Hebrew, and have included the Jews in their movement; and had Christianity started on this subcontinent, the word would probably have been Sanskrit, and then the inhabited world might have included more than the Christian community. The time has come for us to be ecumenical in the true meaning of the word: the religions of the inhabited world must come together seeking a sympathetic understanding of one another, respecting our differences, helping one another as we face our common problems. We probably should not try to adopt the word *ecumenical* for such a movement, its connotations are now distinctly Christian, and in a part of the world where the Greeks are remembered more for their military invasion than for their culture, it would not be fitting; but regardless of what we call it, the time has come for a world-wide effort to bring all religious communities of the world closer together in understanding and cooperation.

It is especially appropriate that in this place, men should consider new ways to bring the religious organizations of the world closer together, for this part of the world—north-west India, Kashmir, Afghanistan—has been for centuries a crossroad for many religions: Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jains, Christians, Confucians, Taoists, as well as Sikhs, have all gone back and forth along these roads. And from this part of the world Guru Nanak, as he came to see more clearly the religious insights he brought to mankind, travelled from Hardwar to Brindaban, Varanasi, Ceylon, Baghdad and Mecca. He knew the languages needed, and talked with priests, Pandits, Swamis, Sanyasis, Bhikkhus, Jain monks, Shaikhs, Pirs, Qazis, Mullahs, and Sufis. The *Guru Granth* contains writings by Hindus and Muslims. The Sikh, according to the *Gauri Sukhmani*, "will look upon the whole creation as his friend."

If we are to overcome the antagonisms and condescension which have brought shame to our religious communities and doubt as to our integrity, we must start by trying to see a religious way of life other than our own, as it is seen by those who follow it, who are committed to it. This is a difficult task to which we must bring all the skills at our disposal. We must be open, ready to listen rather than to tell, free of preconceptions, restraining our tendency to force all new information into familiar categories. This is a task performed by those who have first studied their own religious beliefs, become aware of their own commitments, recognized what they hold to be sacred, and still are free enough, open

enough, not to use their own beliefs as norms for judging the religious beliefs and practices of others.

The first step, the initiative, must be taken by religious scholars. There is no easy way, no short cut, to the open, sympathetic understanding among religious communities that we seek. We must train religious scholars for the task, scholars who know the languages needed and who have skills in the fields of history, philosophy, theology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and the arts; scholars who have religious knowledge and religious sensitivity and can recognize such knowledge and sensitivity in others.

These scholars must study the religious writings available, must come to understand the history, as it is seen within the religious community, the view of the natural world and of man's place in that world as it is taught by the community, the nature of the good life and the goal to which men aspire. They must understand how each religious community answers the questions: how does man know what is good? What resources does man have to help him in his religious aspirations?

But scholarly research limited to the study of the available literature is not enough. We now have facilities for travel which make it possible to gain first-hand knowledge of religious communities other than our own. There must be time for extended study with the leaders of the religious community, for working out joint translations, for observation and participation in religious activities. Such experience in the religious community studied is a necessity even for skill in reading available literature. Understanding among men of different religious communities becomes a reality as they become aware of the reality of the experience of the sacred in their lives.

We must learn, and we must also teach. As scholars are developed who are capable of presenting a religious position other than their own, they must have available translations of the sacred writings and of the contemporary writings of religious leaders of all faiths in order that those who cannot travel and study in other religious communities can also understand religious commitments other than their own. We must provide for such teaching; sacred writings in translation, biographies, critical writings, literature, recordings of religious music, the reproductions of religious art, and films and slides to bring the reality of the religious practices of others home to those who have not seen them. We must also make available extended exchange lectureships; not just casual visits, by scholarly religious leaders who can present their position clearly without defensiveness.

The aim must be first to develop religious leaders who have come to understand a religious community, or communities, other than their own, then educated laymen who share that understanding, until finally our religious communities, can see one another with the compassion and love

they preach and can never again be used as a tool in social and nationalistic antagonisms.

This is not a plea for tolerance: tolerance implies condescension, a benevolence on the part of one who tolerates. Much more is required.

Nor is it a suggestion that we should now engage in dialogue, as if mere talking together would be enough. We need more than conversation, more than questions out of ignorance and answers often equally ill-informed, however polite. We need more than occasional conferences of men of good will. We need hard, continuing study of all the religious communities of the world, study of our own religious communities and of religious groups other than our own. We need teaching and writing based on those studies, done by professors and religious leaders who can present a different point of view, as it is seen by those who hold it.

Nor is this a plea for the comparative study of religious beliefs and practices, for the comparative study tends too often towards evaluative judgements which too often justify one's own position and disparage others. There are common issues, common problems, and there are unique qualities in the different religious communities, but before there can be any useful comparisons we must be sure that the other communities are fully understood. There may come a time when our critical skills and our knowledge are sufficiently refined so that our comparisons will not be pejorative, or biased, or sentimental, or bland. That time may come within the next fifty years, but as of now it is not a productivity method.

Nor is this a suggestion that we should seek a new, electric religion, a new opiate designed by modern man for his own comfort. There is little in the history of past electric attempts to indicate that they have survival value, or lead to new insights, or to understanding among religious groups.

At its best, the religious search has been for truth, for truth which transcends the changing, petty, suffering, playful, joyous existence of man. We suggest only that it is time to study openly, without reservation, how the most perceptive of men have talked about and lived by the highest truth they could discover, and that the time is right for a major scholarly effort to do this in the next half century.

What will be the outcome of such a sympathetic, open study of religious communities other than our own? We may discover new truth, but that is always a chancy hope. We will be living more consistently with the truth we already know from our own religious teachings. Sometimes, the stranger's question about our own religious position will give us a new insight; sometimes the scholar from another religious tradition will see things in our tradition that we had not perceived; sometimes we will see a new meaning in our own religious life as we see meaning in the religious life of our neighbour; sometimes, as we come to understand the religious commitments of other men, we will discover that we have

a bias for a cleaner understanding of those who differ with us, who differ not only religiously, but socially and politically as well.

In a world torn by strife, a world in which the religious communities have been too often ineffective and even manipulated for selfish purposes, the time has come, 500 years after the birth of Guru Nanak, for religious scholars to take the initiative to replace divisiveness and distrust with understanding and compassion.

XXXV

A DIALECTICAL EXCURSUS ON THE UNITY OR PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS

R. PANIKKAR

Let us analyse the mere dialectical implications of the unity or plurality of religions.

We shall begin by analysing logically the statement "all religions are the same."

This expression, which is becoming a slogan for many, is an unfortunate formulation of a deeper truth. The statement, as such, is a contradiction in terms, for if "religions" are "the same," there is only one religion; and if we speak of "religions," there must be differences to allow the plural. If these differences are substantial, then there are several religions; if they are accidental, then there is only one substantial religion with many accidental garbs. But the garb does not make the religion, unless we mean by religion only the outer and secondary features. No living religion, however, would accept this, because it would mean either that "all religions are not religions," or a double and logically forbidden use of the same word: "All religions" (identified with the accidentals) "are the same" (religion understood as the unique core of all so-called "religions"). In other words, either the equality preached is fundamental and substantial and then there would be only one religion and we could not properly speak of religions, or it is secondary and accidental, and then there would be many different religions.

We can make it still clearer by means of pure logic.

"All religions are the same," the same *what*? It can only mean either: "all religions are the same religion" or "all religions are the same thing," i.e., the same "super-religion" or "sub-religion." The first interpretation is evidently contradictory for the reason already explained. If "all religions are the same religion" insofar as they are "religions," they are not "religion" at all. The second formulation amounts to saying that all religions are equal, because ultimately they converge on the one and the same kernel. This kernel would be the true and "same religion" of all religions. But then, whatever the truth-content of the statement may be, we have two different meanings of the concept of religion: the concept "religions" in the subject is understood as the several historically existent

religions, and the concept "same" in the predicate is taken as the quintessence or kernel of the concept meant in the subject. This is to say: all religions are essentially one, but insofar as they are "religions" they are precisely not the "same."

"All religions are *essentially* one" can mean either that "all religions are religions" (for "essence" is what makes a thing to be what it is), which is obviously a tautology, or that "all religions are different *forms* of the one essence of religion." This is precisely what is under analysis, namely, if there is an intelligibility of various religious forms, i.e., of different numerical realities of the one essence of religion. This formula means then, either that all religions are really different realization of the one essence "religion," i.e., different religions, or that all the many forms of religion are just irrelevant because "religion" is precisely only the "essence" of religion.

Dialectically, we can proceed still one step further. We can say that either, "there are many religions or there is only one religion."

Within dialectical limits, we can advance the thesis that the alternative "R is either one of manifold" will be solved by either one of the two different mental attitudes of human thinking: *essential* or *existential* thinking.

(A) *The Essential Thinking*

The *essential thinking* will look at the concept, at the universal "R," and it is evident that the concept R must always be the same, otherwise we should speak of R_1 , R_2 , R_3 , but not of "R." The essence of one concept must always be the same when we apply it to different numerical things. If man is essentially one, there is only one identical *essence* of man. Likewise, there cannot be several *essences* of religion, but there can only be one essence of religion, although there may be many religions, just as there are many men. If by *silver*, we understand a definite chemical element with a precise number of elemental particles ordered in a definite manner, then there is only one silver. Moreover, a false silver is not silver at all, it may look like it but it *is not* silver. The essential thinking will stress that there *is only one* religion, because there is only one concept of religion, something which enables us to call a thing a religion. This *essential thinking* can be *maximalist* or *minimalist* and, each of these positions will interpret differently the statement: *there is only one religion*.

(i) *Maximalism*: The maximalist will say: There is only one religion and that is our religion, because only our religion fulfils all the essential characteristics of religion. All other so-called religions are false religions, that is to say, they are not religions at all but have only an appearance of religion, as false silver or false wine is neither silver nor wine.

(ii) *Minimalism*: The minimalists will not deny that the existing religions fulfil the conceptual definition of religion. Therefore they will

say that there is only one religion, which is the real essence of all existing religions. This only one religion is the very essence of religions, which appears multiplied in the several existing religious groups or traditions. They will not claim that only *one* religion is true, but that *religion* is true and that this very essence is precisely that which enables us to call religions the several organized systems of belief on the earth. All are numerical cases, individuals, incarnations, more or less perfect, of the unique essence of religion.

(B) *The Existential Thinking*

On the other side, the *existential thinking* will not be concerned as much with the pure essential concept of religion, as with the real existential things which call themselves religions; and consequently it will stand for the plurality of religions as the most evident and undeniable fact. Religion may be a system of thought and of life leading man to God or to his liberation, or to his end, but, in fact, there exists a plurality of such ways. *There are many religions.* If we want to undertake a serious and realistic study of the problem without falling into utopian or idealistic theories—they say—we must take things as they are in full without merely essentialistic abstractions. The concept of a nation, for example, may be always the same, but Germany is not Argentina, and their national problems are not the same. Yet we are not concerned with studying the concept of a nation but with the real problems and existential features of the German or Argentine people. The same applies to religions.

So far we have tried to show that many apparently contradictory statements about the unity or plurality of religions are conditioned by the peculiar type of mind by which—or rather by the special angle under which—the problem is envisaged.

Of course, there must be something unique that allows us to call a religion, 'religion,' and also there must be something different which permits us to speak of religions in plural. In other words, on the one hand, religions can be many because there is *one* religion. Diversity implies oneness. Otherwise it would not be diversity but sheer otherness. A thing is different from another insofar as it is a different *thing*. Religion permits us to speak of religions in plural. In other words, on the one hand, religions are different specimens of one thing called religion. On the other hand, religions can be *many* only because the *oneness* of religion is not so absolute as to be exhausted, as it were, in a single religion. If there were an absolutely perfect religion, it would have no room for any plurality, as an angel in Aristotelian and Thomistic Philosophy fills up fully his nature, leaving no place for different individuals. But, of course, the problem lies precisely in the peculiar relation between unity and diversity in this temporal world of ours. Religion is not just one essence; nor is

it a perfect existence. It is a complex human fact, involving an absolute and the cosmos too, but in the temporal status of our itinerant being.

(C) *The Substantial and the Functional Thinking*

We can approach our question with one of the attitudes of the mind already described. We can, however, in an attempt at philosophical integration direct our attention to one of the most important epistemological features of our culture since the birth of the physical sciences in the West some centuries ago. I have called it elsewhere *substantial* and *functional* thinking.

One of the main characteristics of our times, which gives a very distinctive shape to our cultures, is undoubtedly the birth of the physical sciences. They build the basis for technology, industrialization, and for almost all the features of our times, providing also the basis for a type of universality which no culture has known since mankind's existence on the earth.

One of the starting-points of this tremendous evolution lies in a humble, almost invisible change in the minds of European intellectuals of the late Middle Ages. It was a change of interest which carried with it a profound break in the very ways of our thinking. The interest shifted from the *why* to the *how*, from knowing the hidden "reasons" of things to discovering the effective "modes" of reality, briefly, from philosophy to science. In the first place, philosophy itself became almost a science and finally a handmaid of science. For a time, metaphysics was considered an obscurantist and unworthy remnant of the "Dark Ages." Today, the equilibrium is on its way to being restored although the impact of science not only on man and his civilization but also on philosophy itself remains a positive conquest.

Science and philosophy are different, but not incompatible. The gnoseological instrument of science is a particular way of thinking which I would call *functional* thinking. What matters for science is not to know *what* things are, but how things *behave*, i.e., their *function*. Philosophy, on the other hand, is concerned with the *substantiality* of things, with their *is-ness*, *structure*, *essence*, and the like. As a matter of fact, this *substantial* thinking for many centuries was mainly interpreted in an almost *static* manner, so that there was hardly any place given to *dynamic* philosophical thinking. Substantial dynamism and philosophical thinking were considered incompatible but, in fact, they are not, for the latter does not need to be only a merely static substantial reflection. The introduction of dynamic thinking into philosophy has been the good service done by science to philosophy, a fact which is of some importance for our subject. There are two ways of regarding religions.

The one way is concerned with the *static structure* of every religion, that is, its nature, its tenets, its static being as a thing that *there* is—its

truth-contents; the other way is concerned with the *dynamic function* of every religion, i.e., its real effects, what it stands for, the function it performs in human life, its dynamic being as a real force that *works*, its *truth-intention*.

Whereas the traditional minds look almost exclusively at the static aspect, modern minds stress, on the contrary, the dynamic feature. This has created a certain uneasiness among several genuine religious thinkers. They provide another example of the "modern" misunderstanding between philosophy and science. The important thing, says the former, is what *a religion is*. What matters, answers the latter, is what a religion stands *for*. Consequently, a real and fruitful dialogue has often been doomed to failure when the different perspectives had not been made apparent.

It is quite obvious that for static-substantial thinking, religions are many and different. Moreover, for this epistemological attitude there is even little hope for any religious encounter. Religions may coexist or one may merge into another, but not enter into any osmotic exchange, as it were.

For functional thinking, on the other hand, the problem of the unity of religions seems almost evident. Religions perform, or at least claim to perform, the same function; thus they are equivalent, according to this sort of mental thinking which is only sensitive to the "valence" of things.

The possibility of having philosophical thinking (substantial thinking) without reducing it to static thinking—i.e., including in dynamic thinking—will allow us to overcome the gap between the two one-sided epistemological approaches.

Traditionally, philosophy has been more at home with the static substantial research and, in consequence, the philosophy of religion has been concerned mainly with the first set of problems. It was left to history of religions to deal with the second series of problems with the consequent tension between both disciplines. I think that the philosophical dynamic thinking I have mentioned may help to bridge this gulf and make possible a richer philosophical study on religion without falling into a conflict with the history of religions or with the justified claims of a real philosophy of religion. In a word, I would like to reconcile the "science" of religions with the "philosophy" of religion, at least on this particular point in question.

The Great Dilemma

There is still another great problem which may receive some light from a dialectical introduction.

If every religion claims, in one way or another, to have a message of salvation (in whatever way it may be understood), it is bound to affirm that if you fall away from it you will not attain salvation—unless you

follow then another path of salvation. However "broad-minded" a religion may be regarding "paths" of salvation, it must recognize that there is something like, to go astray from the path or the paths. In simple words, the very message of salvation that every religion affirms to possess implies the recognition and the possibility of damnation in one form or another—otherwise "salvation" would be an empty word. Every religion in singular and the whole complex of religions must then face this great dilemma of salvation or damnation.

One of its most striking formulations is the known Christian dictum, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, i.e., "there is no salvation outside the Church." In other words, only one religion, *R* brings salvation to man. What can this possibly mean? It can only mean, dialectically, the following :

Either you follow *R* or you do not reach salvation. The whole issue lies now in determining who follows *R*. Now, if following *R* is incompatible with the allegiance to any other religion, then the dictum affirms that all members of other religions cannot be saved. This amounts to saying that the other religions are false religions and, thus, no religions at all : they do not lead to salvation. Logically speaking, the conclusion is correct. Now it seems hard to believe that any religion could make such a claim, for it could only be honestly held as true if to the non-followers of *R* is denied the character of full human personality. And, in fact, history of religions provides us with examples. In the same way that God creates a manifold variety of creatures and gives them different ends, according to the very nature they have received, so within the species man, there would be one class which has received as a gratuitous gift "salvation," whereas the other class has not. It would not be logically impossible for the human mind to justify such an inscrutable design of God, but unless one believes that God himself has revealed such a thing, no human being can morally hold such a view. Yet there is something sufficiently revolting in such an assumption that we need not describe it further.

The only logical escape from such a terrifying conclusion is to admit the possibility of coexistence between following *R* and the membership of another religion *R*₁, *R*₂, etc. If such is the case, the very conception of *R* must essentially differ from the common idea of religion as a sociological fact, for it would have to be said that *R* (out of which there is no salvation) is a kind of super-religion containing the decisive element of salvation *S* which can also be shared by other religions. *S* would be, as it were, the soul of religion.

The problem that now arises concerns the nature of this *S*. If religions are the instrument of salvation, and *S* is the active element in them, that which makes a religion is the presence of that saving *S*. This dictum then amounts to saying that outside a true religion (i.e., a religion possessing the element *S*), there is no salvation and it would call *R* the core of true religions. Now a double interpretation is possible, a

democratic equalitarian conception of R as a parliament of religions, or a hierarchic historical notion of R as the full depository of S acting and present also in R_1 , R_2 , etc.

Let us take a concrete example just to visualize better these two interpretations. Let us imagine that S is the Advaitic intuition and that this intuition is considered possible within several or even all religions. The individual would then be saved by realizing that intuition and the role of religion would then be to lead man to such a realization. All religions would then be nothing but different ways and could meet obviously in a parliament of religions in order to discuss their respective methods to make S more effective. Indeed in this case, the dictum is still valid, namely, that outside the true R (which is in fact S realized more or less in R_1 , R_2 , etc.), there is no salvation. This would be an example of the first interpretation. Let us now think of S as a divine grace identified with the life of God given to men through one mediator between the Godhead and the world, and that this mediator is at work everywhere, though he dwells fully on the earth in order to continue his work in the bosom of a concrete religion R , which without having the monopoly of S (as visible religion) offers to S its proper place. This would be an example of the second interpretation.

Pure phenomenology and mere dialectics cannot go much further and do not solve the true and real problem in which the whole complexity of our integral existence is involved. But a dialectical clarification of the problem helps undoubtedly to centre the issue.

XXXVI

PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING GURU NANAK'S HYMNS

KHUSHWANT SINGH

I have been engaged in translating the sacred writings of the Sikhs off and on for the last ten years. My first attempt was to render Guru Nanak's *Japji*, the morning prayer, into English verse. This exercise gave me some inkling into the difficulties any translator has to face, particularly one who like me did not have sufficient knowledge of Punjabi or of any of the older Indian languages, nor had any firsthand experience of religious phenomena. At that time I was living in London and my only means of resolving doubts was to consult other people's translations. This I did—both the Punjabi and the English renderings. I discovered that there were as many interpretations as there were interpreters. I did the best I could. I rendered the *Japji* into verse following as closely as I could the rhyming pattern of the original. This was published by Messrs Probsthain of London and then as an appendix to my very short and inaccurate book *The Sikhs* published by Messrs Allen and Unwin. I had grave misgivings about my translations. Perhaps, thought I, the better proposition would be to have a conclave of scholars or theologians and get an authentic version of the Scripture.

The opportunity to arrange such a conclave materialized a few years later—to be precise, in 1956. The UNESCO project to translate a selection of our sacred writings gave me the opportunity to bring together five of the most eminent representatives of the learned fraternity as translators along with three equally renowned theologians as advisers. The experience of working with this group was, in turns, frustrating to the point of exhaustion and then a sense of release and exuberance. In simpler parlance, this conclave of scholars and theologians failed to agree on any one of the important problems posed to them. There was a complete impasse. Having thus exhausted themselves, they threw up their hands in despair and said, "You choose any one of the versions we put before you." So I, the least erudite of them all, in fact, became the final arbiter of these most important and elusive points of interpretation. Thereafter, I went ahead and enjoyed myself rendering these beautiful hymns with a sense of irresponsible abandon. I often mauled the translations submitted by scholars to conform to my interpretation. You

have the final result available in the UNESCO version, *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*.

My final foray into the domain of translation was again like the first when I was abroad and had nothing save the prior translations to guide me. This was the translation of a selection of Guru Nanak's hymns—selections made by a panel chosen by the Guru Nanak Foundation—and again sponsored by UNESCO. I did the translations single-handed. But by this time I was able to reassure myself that, if I had my doubts about interpreting certain words and concepts in a certain way, so had all the other translators. This translation has now been published by Messrs Orient Longmans—and might have come to the notice of some of you. In this, my last effort, I found myself compelled to make changes in my own earlier translations published in my first book on the Sikhs and subsequently in the first of my two volumes, *The History of the Sikhs*, published by Princeton and Oxford and in the UNESCO-sponsored *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*. In short, in four publications I have four different translations of the very same text.

I make this long confessional as an introduction chiefly to prove that there is not, nor there can be, any such thing as an authentic, definitive translated version of a religious classic. Each one will bear the imprint of the translator's personality—his ability to swim between the twin shores of the two languages—as well as of his shortcomings; his involvement with religion and his commitment to his task will be apparent.

When I first embarked on these translations I had assumed that since the search for truth or reality or God was common to all religions, the founders of different religions would have shared the same experience and used somewhat similar vocabulary to express them. Following that assumption I re-read the Bible (particularly the Old Testament) and the Quran. I was very dismayed to find that, valuable as that re-reading proved to be, it was not enough; that our religious system derived basically from Hinduism had many concepts which did not exist in the Hebraic family of religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And yet Sikhism had been so influenced by some Islamic concepts that its basically Hindu roots had sprouted into a tree which bore flowers with Hindu names but Islamic fragrance. I will not labour with simile and metaphor but give you some illustrations.

First we come to the notion of God. He is, of course, One (*Ek*). But what exactly is that *Ek*? The opening lines of the *Mul Mantra*—the root belief repeated as *mangalacharan*, invocation, before all prayer—describe that *Ek* as *aumkara*, the *aum-creator*. To further discover the nature of *aum*, we go to the Vedas and the Upanishads. Here, we find several references to *aum*, the mystic syllable, the sound which contains the entire range of sounds, time which contains all time—the past, the present and the future, and so on. It becomes abundantly clear that

not only is the concept of *aum* unknown to the Hebraic family of religions, it defies a precise description even in its Hindu connotation. And as the Sikh reincarnation as *aumkara*, the *aum*—maker or creator—the best I as a translator could do was to elevate the M or the C of the maker-creator to capital letters and thus equate it with God. I felt that the qualitative *Ek*, preceding the *Aumkar*, legitimately entitled me to discard the esoteric notions of timelessness, aurality, etc., ascribed to *Om* by the Hindu texts and emphasize only Sikhism's commitment to monotheism. Hence the simple translation, "There Is One God."

I know most Sikh scholars are not happy with such simplification. But that is the best a translator rendering the Scripture into English can do.

Equally difficult is the concept of *Nam* and the exhortation *Nam Japo*. The English word 'name' is a most inadequate, even misleading, synonym for *Nam*. Besides, taking the name of the Lord has a distinctly pejorative connotation; "Do not take the name of the Lord in vain." To add to the translator's problem is the concept of *Satnam*, often translated as the "true name." The English-speaking people know no such thing as the "true name" nor indeed any such practice as *Nam Japana* in the way we know it; the repetition of *Ram, Ram, Ram* or *Satnam Wahiguru* with the inhalation or exhalation of breath or keeping pace with the telling of the rosary—the Catholic *pater-noster* or *Hail Mary* litany is somewhat different. How then does one render *nam*? Hew McLeod calls it "the divine Name (with capital N)," the expression of the nature and being of God in terms comprehensible to the human understanding. But he does not wrestle with the problem of finding a one-word English synonym. I found it best to vary it according to the context. In the *Mul Mantra*, I accentuated the prefix *Sat* and translated *Satnam* as the Supreme Truth—meaning both truth and reality as the attributes of God. Elsewhere, I largely accepted the traditional rendering of *Nam* as name. I am not very happy with this and hope some day someone will come out with something closer to the original.

Then we have the all-important *Sabda*. McLeod calls it the "word, the divine self-communication" and further distinguishes it from the ordinary word by capitalizing the letter W. The Word, as used in the Bible—"first there was the Word"—is perhaps close enough to *Sabda* but by no means synonymous with it, as the word is charged with celestial overtones, echoes of divine resonance, ethereal music played by hands unseen or sounds of music unstruck by human hands. How does one convey all this in translation? I do not know.

Another word which has given me infinite trouble is *Sahaj*. Is it a state of mind, equipoise—the gentle training of the mind? Or is it the goal, the fusion of the personal self with the eternal, the *atman* with the *Brahman*, the ultimate of mystic experience? I have found the word used with all these different meanings, and felt utterly defeated by it.

These are only a few instances of the difficulties encountered by a translator. There are many more. Those of you familiar with Guru Nanak's *Siddha-Goshti* dialogue with yogis will know how difficult it is to comprehend some of the practices of *Hatha Yoga*; the holding of breath or the alternate use of the nostrils, churning the inside of the navel, drawing up the essence of the life-force up the spinal column, etc. Here again, although I have ventured to translate it, I admit absolute defeat.

I would like to end with the plea that when next you pick up a translation, be kinder in your judgement and remember that there is not, nor ever will be, an authentic, definitive translation of our Scriptures.

XXXVII

THE HISTORIAN, THE GURU AND THE CHRIST

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Man's long religious experience has left behind it many and varied remains. There are buildings and artifacts, organized communities and ritual practices, scriptures and traditions. Throughout most of human history men have held an attitude of veneration towards the reminders of their own religion and indifference or hatred towards those of some other religions. However, since the beginning of modern times and the growth of critical historical understanding, men have been able to approach religious traditions with a new orientation. They have searched for objective, historical knowledge about religious forms, institutions, ideas and leaders. While grounded in the work of previous centuries, it has only been since the nineteenth century that men have undertaken a wide-scoped study of their religious past through the work of archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists, historians and philosophers. The task is far from complete. Such study had its beginnings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the West and centred initially in the study of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and its Scriptures. The historical study of Indian religions, and especially of Sikhism, has been a later development. Although there were writings on Sikhism before the nineteenth century, they were either fragmentary reports of travellers or religious polemics. They were perhaps more the raw material for the historian than historical scholarship itself. But early in the nineteenth century, H. T. Colebrooke and others started gathering and editing documents. Then came the basic linguistic work of E. Trumpp by the end of the century. The earliest work of synthesis and systematic presentation of Sikhism from the historical perspective was that of M.A. Macauliffe at the beginning of this century. Since then have come a host of scholarly works by both Indian and Western scholars. The high state of historical study is shown in the latest and most searching work of its type, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* by W. H. McLeod.¹

The documents have been gathered. Linguistic study has rendered their meanings clear. And the historians have related critically these materials into an increasingly comprehensive picture of Sikhism and its founder, Guru Nanak. In this process, it has become increasingly clear

to the Sikh community, as it has to the Christian community, that historical knowledge is not simply religiously indifferent information. Historical analysis of religious traditions and leaders raises for the believer questions and perplexities, as much that was valued as historical fact is called into question. While it was possible to push aside as misunderstandings some of the questions raised by Trumpp who, despite his linguistic genius, was singularly unsympathetic to the texts he rendered, such is not the case with a sympathetic and perceptive scholar like McLeod. His delineation of "the Nanak of history" and "the Nanak of faith" has brought the challenge of modern historicism to a vital place in the Sikh religion.

McLeod's work shows some interesting similarities to a stage in the historical study of the life of Jesus, when some scholars of the last century differentiated between "the Jesus of history" and "the Christ of faith." This similarity suggests the possibility that the subsequent developments in historiography that have effected research in the life of Jesus may also have value in enlarging historical understanding of Guru Nanak. In both cases, the phrase "of history" is a kind of shorthand to indicate the picture of the religious leader, as disclosed by critical historical analysis. It is the history of the person derived from the application of the same techniques of analysis as are appropriate for any person of the past who is to be studied. "Of faith" indicates the concept of Nanak or of Jesus given in doctrinal structures or in community tradition. The "Jesus of history" emerged as an ethical, religious teacher and healer whose radical recasting of Jewish law and piety brought him into a fatal conflict with community authorities. His vivid teachings and dynamic impact on his disciples caused them to believe in his continuing influence on them and the faithful community. The "Christ of faith" was the supernatural Saviour, as envisaged in the Christian doctrines of the Trinity, two natures of Christ and atonement. Traditionally, these two conceptions were held to be identical. However, historical study showed the "Christ of faith" to be a later development of the Church. Anyhow, the demonstration of this distinction between the two raised the question of whether the "Christ of faith" was not distortion of the "Jesus of history" and of his intention. A similar set of questions is raised by the discrimination of the "Nanak of history" and the "Nanak of faith."

To guard against a misunderstanding, it should be clear that it is not being argued that the place of Jesus in Christianity as a historical religion is grounded not simply in the words of its Founder, but more basically in what he did. The centre of Christianity is not its ethical teachings but in the offer of new life granted to men through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospels, with their accounts of events in the life of Jesus, form part of the Christian Scriptures and hold a place of high authority, whereas the Janamsakhis are not part of the *Guru Granth* nor do they share its authoritative place in the faith of the Sikh community.

Yet it is not possible to go to the extreme with those who argue that Sikhism is not a historically grounded religion and is somehow exempt from the difficult questions raised by critical, historical investigations of the life of Guru Nanak. While not involved in the same way as Christianity in the historicity of its Founder, Sikhism does not evidence the historical disinterest or distance that makes, for example, the reconstruction of the historical Gautama a near impossibility. There is an ample supply of traditional remembrances of Nanak. But what is more important is that there is in the Sikh community an interest in Nanak as the ideal expression of the truths which he taught. Those who seek to live by the light of "the interior guru" inevitably look to Guru Nanak as the supreme expression of the *Satguru*.² His life and piety have an archetypal force and value. As the encounter of Christianity with modern historicism has shown, no religion is so historically based as to stand or fall with the latest findings of the historian. Yet Sikhism, like the more historically grounded religions, does not stand aloof from the findings of critical historical investigation.

The Historian and the Believer

The rise of historical understanding in the West gave men a new and creative perspective on their own religious traditions. The historian was proclaimed as a liberator of the true knowledge of Christ from all that had obscured it. By more accurate knowledge of the origins of their religion and by better texts of the Scriptures, men could discern and avoid perversions of the religion of Jesus that had developed throughout the history of the Church. The new historical understanding of Jesus and the Scriptures helped to free men from the idolatry, superstition and misleading dogmatism of the medieval and later church. To discover "the Jesus of history" was to be liberated from the misleading picture men had painted of "the Christ of faith."³ This programme of reform was basic to the growth of modern, liberal Christianity. There are certain parallels to this in the work of reformation started at the end of the last century by Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Dit Singh and others connected with the Singh Sabha. These leaders sought a return to true Sikhism through the dissemination of the teachings of the *Guru Granth* and increased knowledge of early Sikh history. The Sikh community was rid of later accretions that had sapped its spiritual strength and moral purity. Similarly today, the discovery of "the Nanak of history" can well serve to correct the distortions that have come into the pictures of "the Nanak of faith" shaped by late popular piety.

Without the perspective of history, men are the victims of their contemporary religious traditions. They lack the means of judging the present beliefs of their religious community by the original message and meaning of their tradition. No religious tradition is ever static; it grows by

interaction with its cultural *milieu*. This growth often brings in alien ideas and practices that undercut the moral and spiritual direction given in the origins of a religion. The struggles of the Sikh community to maintain itself against syncretism with the dominant traditions of its neighbours is a case in point. By knowing history we are no longer victims of historical contingency and its vagaries. However, the historian is not content to stand at the doorway of faith handing to the believer new riches for his use. The historian's insistent questioning enters the sanctuary of faith to examine it critically. The task of the historian does not stop with the assembly and collation of documents. Their contents and the people of which they speak are subjected to a new rational scrutiny to find the historically authentic.

Whereas some within religious communities have welcomed historical study as a liberator, others have feared it as the advance of a destructive secularism into the realm of the sacred. This reaction was most violent in Christianity when historical investigation raised the question of the historicity of Jesus' miracles or accuracy of the reports of his teachings in the Scriptures. The fundamentalist sects within Christianity with their biblical literalism were formed in a defensive gesture against what was taken to be the destructive work of historical criticism. As uneasiness gives way to dismay before the deeply searching questions of the historical accuracy of traditional views on the origins of a religious community and its leaders, the arbitrary banning of historical analysis seems a tempting alternative. However, such an alternative exacts a high price in intellectual rigidity and sterility from those who follow it. The Sikh community would be ill-advised to adopt an attitude of defensive dogmatism, especially in the study of the Janamsakhis. Yet to allow the intellectual dismantling of the account of its origins in the name of historical analysis seems a dangerous step for any religious community. Is there some alternative beyond this rather-bleak rendering of the situation? The alternative lies in examining the nature and scope of historical knowledge and how it relates to other ways of knowing.

The Nature of Historical Knowledge

Mankind has recorded and reflected upon its past in a host of ways. There are the chronicles and registries of ancient kings and nations. There are epic poems retelling the exploits of the past. There are the records of battles and stories of heroes. In the history of religion, there are not only canonical scriptures, but also Janamsakhis, gospels and the lives of the saints which provide rich testimony to the past. Yet one needs only to compare these with a modern historical treatise to see profound differences. It is not simply a difference of literary style but of basic orientation. Whereas some ancient documents are simply lists or registries, most of them are accounts of a legendary and mythological character. The

modern scientific world view of nature as an orderly process shaped by worldly causes was unknown. The Janamsakhis picture the young Nanak as receiving shade from a cobra, instead of death. Or again, the trampled grain is restored whole in an instant. The Gospel narratives picture Jesus walking on water, calming the sea or raising the dead. Gods and demons, angels and nymphs appear as the actors in the drama of history. The cause of events was not traced in terms of social, economic, political or military factors but in terms of the divine pleasure or displeasure or the power of curses and blessings. The rigorous line modern men draw between the world of everyday experience and the world of imagination and belief was constantly transgressed in these ancient documents.

Modern historical scholarship sought some order in this seeming chaos of conflicting views and of a world so different, not only from that of the empirical scientist, but, even from that of the "commonsense" world, as experienced by modern men. The basic premise of the historian's attempt to understand the past more fully is that of the continuity of the past and the present. If the past is in continuity with the present, could not the forces that shape events in our present experience also have been at work in the past? The scope of the possible events in the past is determined by what could be conceived as possible in similar circumstances in the present. Miracle stories are the obvious victim of such a critique. As David Hume, one of the founders of modern historical scholarship, put it, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature: and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly make it."⁴ Hume was not arguing in a metaphysical fashion against the possibility of a miracle. Rather, he is arguing its inherent improbability. When a miracle story is encountered, some other explanation of its presence must be found than that it actually occurred. Hume concluded that their presence was due to "the spirit of religion" whose workings are more of hagiography than of biography. And the guidelines are faint. As McLeod rightly claims: "Agreement between all versions may strengthen the claim of a *sakhi* and disagreement will have the opposite effect. Occasionally, this factor is of appreciable significance, although generally in the negative sense."⁵ These difficulties spring, in part, from the fact that the most immediate reference point of the narratives is not the life of Nanak but the faith of the later Sikh community. A very similar conclusion has been reached about the Gospel narratives by the so-called "Form critical" scholars, Dibelius, Bultmann *et al.* Whereas there may be real historical remembrances as the basis of a given narrative, it has been enmeshed beyond recovery in the piety of the community.

The result of this critical review of the materials has been a major reduction in the scope of knowledge of the lives of many great religious leaders. "The Jesus of history" has nearly approached the disappearing

point as a critical review has eliminated the bulk of Gospel tradition as non-historical. "The Nanak of history" undergoes a similar reduction in scope, so that McLeod can summarize his results in one page.⁶ Historians claim that they have not wilfully despoiled the traditions but, in reverence for the truth, have eliminated the superstitious "overbeliefs" of pious men of old to find the facts. Such an enterprise has both real values and serious limitations.

The attempted separation of the life of a religious leader from its setting in community tradition does provide a basic factual framework of events. Such a framework, even if it is sketchy, shows how such a person is related to the complex tradition arising from a religious response to his life and teachings. To see the historical facts, in separation from even their earliest interpretations, provides for the contemporary religious thinker perspective for reinterpretations that take account of the new cultural *milieu* in which religion lives today. The recognition of legendary and mythological elements in its tradition is a necessary preparation by a religious community for a creative intellectual encounter with the modern world. Without the recognition of the split between the language of myth and legend or the language of the modern world view, religious communities become isolated in a sterile repetition of their claim, giving little thought of translating them into contemporary terms.⁷ By understanding our past, it becomes possible to act creatively in the present.

The tension religious communities experience with historical analysis comes at the point in which people assume the historian's method of investigation as a metaphysic defining reality. The drive for historically verifiable facts carries with it, for many, the implication that these facts are the reality of the past events, whereas the myth and the legend that spring from them do not share in that reality. Historical method has presupposition and criteria which form an implicit set of metaphysical assumptions. These presuppositions become clear in many modern historical works in the distinction made between what has "really happened" and myth and legend—terms usually used pejoratively—to indicate what did not happen. To say that these presuppositions are present does not imply that there are not valid and important insights found through critical historical analysis. Rather, it implies that the truth discovered by the historical method is an abstract and partial truth which does not exhaust the meaning of a past event or person. To hold the findings of a critical historical examination to be the only truth that comes to us from the past is to ignore dimensions of the past that are crucial for the study of a religion. For this reason, historians have undertaken a fresh evaluation of the meaning of myth and legend for historical understanding.

Historie, Geschichte and God-language

The German scholar Rudolf Bultmann and his circle have undertaken

a re-evaluation of the myth in the New Testament.⁸ It is an approach to the question of myth and history that can fruitfully be applied to the study of other religious traditions. Bultmann's analysis proceeds from his understanding of what is meant by "history." There are two German words that are used to express the complex of meaning rendered by the one English word "history." There is the term *Historie* that is used to characterize the basic factual data of time and place. It is what is recovered through critical analysis of the materials. The other term is *Geschichte* which describes the meaning or value of past events in the life of an individual or community. "Geschichte" is what is most characteristically recorded in the ancient world through epic poems, Gospels and Janamsakhis. No event or person of the past who is remembered is simply a neutral happening. It has meaning for a community. To the Christian community, Jesus is not simply a prophetic teacher of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. He is known as Lord and Christ. Similarly, Nanak is not simply a peripatetic *guru* in the Sant tradition to the Sikh community. Rather, he is the Supreme Preceptor of God's truth, the *guru* who depended on no human *guru* but on God for his message. The first characterizations are descriptions of the "Jesus of history" and the "Nanak of history." They are *Historie*. The second set of characterizations are those of the "Christ of faith" or the "Nanak of faith." They are *Geschichte*. They represent the meaning of these persons to the community of faith. But this meaning is still related to history, because it springs from past human experience. The meaning of Nanak, as the meaning of Jesus, is not something arbitrarily imposed on the *facts*. It grows out of the events themselves.

Modern historical studies seek to separate *Historie* from *Geschichte*. By contrast, ancient historians left fact and meaning intimately intertwined. But there is another difference between the modern and ancient ways of recording history. Meaning and value are expressed through abstract philosophical or theological language in the modern world. For men of the past, myth and legend were the way of expressing meaning. Great difficulties obtain at just this point with the use of the word "myth." It has so long been used as a pejorative term, its proper use as a technical term to describe a particular means of expression or a type of language has been rendered difficult. The term "myth" is used here, not as a characterization of something as untrue, but as a particular way of expressing the meaning or value of an event. More specifically in religious documents "myth" is a type of language used to characterize the presence of the transcendent in a person or event. To put it in another way "myth" is a type of "God-language." Myth pictures as this-worldly activity that which is other-worldly. Myth points to those aspects of an event that go beyond our normal expectations. Myth is the way in which men of old wrote their *Geschichte*. It points to that which goes beyond *Historie*. Myth uses the extraordinary, the miracle, divine or demoniacal causalities

to explain events. It is a pictorial, concrete mode of expression in contrast to the abstract and impersonal God-language used by modern philosophy and theology.

The battle-line over the question of myth has unfortunately been drawn between the religious traditionalist who demands that it be accepted as literal history and the critical historian who demands its elimination. Neither of these responses, I would submit, is an appropriate one for the historian interested in an adequate understanding of religion. The aim should be not elimination but reinterpretation. Myth is not primarily cosmological but anthropological in its meaning. It has to do with the way in which events and persons have transformed the meaning of human life. It shows the way in which man encounters the other. The historian demurs at this point by referring all such mythological language to the philosopher or theologian because they, as witness to the transcendent, are not the concern of the historian. Yet can the historian of religion ignore the testimony of religious communities to the conviction they have that they have encountered some "Other" through their tradition. To do so would be to end with an adumbrated view of religious history. This awareness is not something apart from history but a necessary part of a thorough historical understanding. As the historian of religion Van der Leeuw put it, "The more deeply comprehensive penetrates any event, and the better it 'understands' it, the clearer it becomes to the understanding mind that the ultimate ground of understanding lies not within itself, but in some 'Other' by which it is comprehended from beyond the frontier."¹⁰ While no history of a religious community or leader can ignore the social, political and economic factors at work in the past, it cannot ignore the witness to the transcendent, either.

To eliminate myth and legend leaves a vital gap in the historian's scheme of explanation. This gap becomes evident when the question is raised of how the transition was made from the Nanak or the Jesus "of history" to the Nanak or the Jesus "of faith." Could the figure described by the historian have given rise to the religious community that sprang from his life? Jesus appears as a teacher of apocalyptic Judaism who may or may not have made certain messianic claims. Nanak is a peripatetic *Guru* who wrote religious verse. There were contemporaries of both Jesus and Nanak who fitted these descriptions. Nanak's teachings, like those of Jesus, had certain innovative features. But these were not revolutionary, whereas the impact they had on men clearly was. The transition from the "Nanak of history" to the "Nanak of faith" is not understandable on the basis of the picture of Nanak elucidated by a critical historical understanding. In this sense, the critical historical picture is incomplete. The function of myth in this connection is of witness to a different aspect of the historical reality of Nanak. Myth expresses the fact that through him the believer passes into a new possibility of existence that radically transcends the expectations of life up to that

time. Myth is witness to a discontinuity in the life of a community that points beyond itself and its historical setting to the transcendent. The myths about Nanak are witness to the fact that the transition to new possibilities of life was intimately grounded in the concrete work of Nanak himself. The separation between the "Nanak of history" and the "Nanak of faith" is finally not tenable.

Interpenetration of Time

The synoptic problem that arises when agreement is sought among the narratives in the Janamsakhis or the Gospels has rendered the establishment of a linear chronology problematic. The reason for this seeming temporary disarray is not to be ascribed to sheer obscurantism. Rather, this problem points to a phenomenon in the life of a religious community and its relationship with its leader. This is the phenomenon of the interpenetration of time. There is, in these documents, an evidence of the merging of the past, present and future in the experience of the community with its leader. To put this matter in its simplest terms, the religious community, in both Sikhism and Christianity, does not set a radical distinction between its experience of its leader before and after his death.¹¹ The life of Nanak, like the life of Jesus, is not understood as separated from that of their communities by death. Rather, the life of the leader and the faithful community interpenetrate each other, so that the present experience of the leader by the community is seen as part of his historical life, and conversely, his historical life is seen as part of the life of the community. This is not simply a case of vivid memory or codified teachings, although these play a part. It is rather that the community may experience a continuing purposive direction from the leader. Thus in assembling the remembrances of its leader, the community merges the present experience and the future hops into past remembrances.

In Christianity, this interpenetration of time has been understood in the light of the resurrection faith of the early church. The faith of the early Christian community in the resurrection of Jesus did not have as its basic referent the empty tomb in which Jesus had been buried.¹² Rather, this faith was related to the continuing experience by the Church of Jesus as the living Lord, giving guidance and new truth. Because Jesus was not held by the power of death, this ministry that had started in Palestine could now go on in the life of the Church everywhere. The Gospels reflect this awareness. Their remembrances of Jesus are replete with the liturgical language of the Church as, for example, the birth hymns of Luke. The characteristic liturgical formulae for exorcism, healing, absolution and preaching are conflated with events in Jesus' early ministry.¹³ This conflation of the present experience of Jesus as the Risen Lord with that of his earthly ministry, conducted in obscurity and humility, intro-

duces a number of anachronisms. The future is made the present. The promises of the Jewish sanctuary, and earthquakes are pictured as taking place already in the ministry of Jesus by Matthew.¹⁴ The past becomes the present. The feeding of the five thousand becomes an early Christian sacrament—the Eucharist—in which the bread is mystically transformed into the flesh of Christ, according to John.¹⁵ The earthly Jesus has bestowed upon him all the Christological titles—Christ, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man (apocalyptically understood) with which there is no direct evidence he associated himself during his lifetime.¹⁶

The doctrinal framework within which Sikhism interprets the phenomenon of the interpenetration of time is its understanding of the term “guru.” On one level, the term “guru” indicates a particular person whose perfected being makes him a guide and exemplar for the religious life. The *guru* is the teacher through whom the saving knowledge of God is made known to men. For the Sikh community, this term belongs to Nanak and his successors down to Guru Gobind Singh. This succession was possible because the power to be a *guru* does not depend solely on the human teacher himself. The power of being a *guru* points beyond itself to God, as Guru Arjun said, “The True Guru is Niranjana God, the Uncreated One. Do not believe that he is in the form of a man.”¹⁷ The Janamsakhi that relates the experience of Nanak at the Bein River when he is taken into the court of God to receive the cup of the Name gives in mythological terms this second definition of the *guru*. Nanak himself had no human *guru*. The Guru is God, not considered *nirguna*, but God as revealed in his *Sabad*, his word.¹⁸ Understood in this sense, the power of being a *guru* derives from God and, hence, can be passed from one teacher to the next until it enters the scriptures and the community. The power of being a *guru* transcends any particular time or person because it is an aspect of God himself. In this way, the faithful community is not related to Guru Nanak solely by memory. The voice of God that spoke through him has spoken through other Gurus and continues to speak through the *Guru Granth* and within the Khalsa. “The Master is near at hand,” although a sinful man may not perceive him.¹⁹

The experience of the interpenetration of time through the presence of the Guru in the community was the most real in those earliest days of the community life. This experience provides the context in which the Janamsakhis were formed. The Sikh community was experiencing the overcoming of caste, the reform of immoral lives and a deepening knowledge and love of God reflected in a new love for fellowmen. All this was possible because of the *Guru Prasad*, the grace of the Guru. This moral and spiritual renewal was not simply through the recollection of the past instruction but came from the living presence of the Guru. In such a context, the occurrence of historical anachronisms in the recollection was understandable. The past, present and future merge in

a seemingly bewildering way, when measured against a linear chronology. The child Nanak writes acrostic verse while still learning the alphabet.²⁰ In this legend, the unique ability of the child is conceived as the basis of a wisdom used to bring mankind the Truth of God. It is not an account of a prodigy as much as of a witness to the uniqueness of him through whom man comes to know God. It is not simply that Nanak was an apparently gifted child but that he was the one through whom God is made known. The present experience of knowing God through the grace of the Guru has been conflated with the remembrance of his early life. The *sakhi* saying the truth given through Nanak is integral to his very being. In this way the story is very similar to that of Jesus as a boy in the temple of Jerusalem confounding the teachers of the law with his questions.²¹ The experience of the early church of being freed from Jewish ceremonial legalism is here conflated with an account of Jesus visiting the temple as a child. Nanak and Jesus have importance in their respective communities not because of something that happened in the past but through something that is happening in the life of the community now. The power of the leader to bring men into a new relation with God is not proved by unusual happenings in his life, but by the contemporary experience of this power. The lines of authority and meaning do not move from our historical certainty about some past event but from our present experience of new life coming into the community by means of its leader as a present active force. So, for example, when the Janamsakhis tell of the remarkable conversions of Shaikh Sajjan and Malik Bhago, the reference is not simply to a past event but to a present one, the experience of conversions that were going on in the community through "the grace of the Guru."²²

This interpenetration of time was a charismatic or ecstatic experience in the life of the early Sikh community. Like all such charismatic gifts, it ultimately was given the institutional form for its preservation and regularization. This "institutionalization of charisma" is what gave rise to the Sikh community, as it became known to later history. The first step in institutionalization was the appointment by Guru Nanak of his successor Guru Angad and then his successor by him until the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, the last of the personal Gurus. The office of the Guru provided the community not only with leadership but acted to protect the revealed truth from distortion in the hands of unworthy or ignorant teachers. In much the same way, the early Christian community sought to protect itself by establishing a line of bishops or overseers who were in succession to the apostles. The bishops in apostolic succession had the power to discern the presence and work of the Risen Christ, because they were guided by the apostolic truth and spirit. Yet as the community grows in size or undergoes disruption of its community life through persecution, the succession of personal teachers becomes too fragile a means of building continuity. With the Tenth Guru, the being

of the Guru enters the *Guru Granth* and the life of the Khalsa. In time, primitive Christianity found apostolic succession an insufficient guide and turned to a codification of its Scriptures and the more formal ordering of its life as the Church. The charismatic experience of the interpenetration of time had been institutionalized into Holy Scripture and Holy Community.

The Return of Charisma

The history of a religion often belies its beginnings. Forms, now emptied, of meaning, usurp the place of the immediate experience of God. The ceremonial routine, the administrative organization, the long tradition, although formed to preserve truth, often obscure it. Religious communities must constantly seek renewal by a return to the vitalities around which they were once formed. No religious community can live out of its dogmas and traditions for long, no matter how passionately held. It is only as we look through these traditions and teachings to the reality to which they point that there can be a return of charisma. In this, historical analysis has a part to play. By understanding our history we avoid being the victims of our particular moment in history. By understanding the growth of tradition and institutions we can perceive afresh the truth around which they grew. In this way, reformulations and reinterpretations will be possible that can keep religion alive in every age of man, modern as well as ancient.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-99. See, for example, *Bhairau* 2, p. 1125.
3. I have treated this question extensively in my book *No Orthodoxy But the Truth* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969).
4. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), X, I, p. 90.
5. McLeod, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
7. This point is made convincingly in connection with Islam by H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trend in Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947), pp. 124 ff. I reach a similar conclusion in *No Orthodoxy But the Truth*, pp. 169 ff. in connection with the Christian community.
8. Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Keryama and Myth*, ed. by H. W. Bartsch, Trans. by R. H. Fuller (London: S. P. C. K., 1953), pp. 8 ff.
9. The difficulties of the use of the term "myth" are illustrated in the rejoinder of Hoshiar Singh, *Sikh Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 181, August 1968, pp. 34-36,

- to an earlier article "The Forgotten Language" which used the term "myth" as a characterization of the *Bachitra Natak*.
10. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, translated, by J. E. Turner, with appendices from the second German edition (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), pp. 683-84.
 11. Although this paper is only concerned with the phenomenon of the interpenetration of time in Sikhism and Christianity it does suggest itself strongly as a hypothesis to be tested in relation to other religious communities and their relations with their leaders.
 12. See Lk. 24:24 and compare it with the evidence given for the empty tomb in 24:22-23.
 13. Lk. 1:14-17, 32-35, 46-56, 68-79; 2:14, 29-35. Mk. 13:25, 2:5, 9-11 with parallels in Mt. and Lk. Lk. 24:27 and 32.
 14. Mt. 27:51-54.
 15. Jn. 6:1-59. This is a recasting of Mk. 6:30-44 with parallels in Mt. and Lk.
 16. The argument here is a complex one that goes beyond the scope of this paper. It has been developed by Bultmann, Dibelious, Bornkamm, *et al.* The grounds for this are seen in those sayings in which Jesus rejects titles of exaltation. See, for example, Lk. 19:18-19.
 17. *Ramkali* 39, p. 895.
See also *Siri Raghu* 19, *Guru Granth*, p. 21.
 18. *Siddha Goshti* 55, p. 943.
 19. *Malar Ast.* 3, *Guru Granth*, p. 1274.
 20. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, ed. by Bhai Vir Singh (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar 1948), pp. 1-4, with parallels in the other *Janamsakhis*.
 21. Lk. 2:41-51.
 22. *Bala Janamsakhi* (Lahore: Rai Sahib Munshi Gulab Singh and Sons, 1923), pp. 25-26 and 81.

XXXVIII

HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE STUDY OF INDIAN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS : ONE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GURU NANAK ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

J. B. CARMAN

This celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of Guru Nanak's birth is unprecedented both in extent and in character, though anticipated in many respects by the Guru Gobind Singh tercentenary three years ago. This celebration is certainly based on the long-standing Sikh interest in the life of the First Guru, but it also has behind it the desire to publicize this historical remembrance and to invite the whole world, non-Sikhs as well as Sikhs, to join in paying homage to the remarkable First Guru of the Sikhs.

This international seminar is but a small part of the total celebration taking place this year in India and around the world, yet it is an important part, for it is one indication of the significant attempt of contemporary Sikhs to bring their long-standing historical interest and historical recollection into closer relation with universal human history, as history is understood in the modern world.

Presenting the historical founder of the Sikh community to a world that is increasingly historically minded leads to both a reinforcement of and a challenge to Sikh history. The traditional Sikh sense of the importance of their formative past is reinforced by the modern sense of the importance of historical events, but the traditional Sikh historiography, i.e. the way in which Sikhs have traditionally told and retold their history from generation to generation, is challenged by the historiography of the modern secular historian, not only in the West, but increasingly in India as well. In this seminar, as well as in other aspects of this celebration, the Sikhs have invited the world into their festive *pandal*, but having accepted the invitation and having come in, the world may stay to criticize as well as to pay its respects.

A few traces of the conflict between the traditional and modern historiography may become evident during this seminar. More indications can be seen in the differences between the various anniversary publications on the life of Guru Nanak, and they will become still more evident

as these publications are discussed, both inside and outside the Sikh community.

The nature of the conflict between the traditional approach to Sikh history and that of many modern historians becomes clear if we examine the recent book by Dr W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. Dr McLeod has attempted to evaluate the *Janamsakhi* traditions, both the various versions as a whole and the individual stories. He attempts to assess the stories as historical accounts contributing to "a reconstruction of the events of the life of Guru Nanak" by dividing them into the following categories : "the established, the probable, the improbable, and the impossible." He indicates seven criteria that guide him in his judgements : (1) "the incidence of the miraculous or plainly fantastic ;" (2) "the testimony of external sources ;" (3) "Guru Nanak's own work, as recorded in the *Adi Granth* ;" (4) "the measure of agreement or, conversely, disagreement which we find in the different *Janamsakhis* ;" (5) "the relative reliability of the different *Janamsakhis* ;" (6) "a measure of trust," which "may be attached to genealogical references ;" and (7) "a geographic criterion in the sense that a greater measure of confidence can be placed in details relating to Guru Nanak's life within the Punjab than to those which concern his travels beyond the province." McLeod concludes his analysis of the *Janamsakhis* by summing up the reliable historical evidence they provide in less than a page and makes the following comment :

In the *Janamsakhis* what we find is the Guru Nanak of legend and faith, the image of the Guru seen through the eyes of popular piety seventy-five or a hundred years after his death. It is an important image, but it is not the primary object of this study. Here we see the person who lived and taught in the Punjab almost five hundred years ago. Of this person the *Janamsakhis* provide only glimpses and by their inadequacy force us back to the works preserved in the *Adi Granth* (page 147).

The next part of McLeod's book is an analysis of Guru Nanak's teachings in the *Adi Granth*. In a brief final chapter, entitled, "The Person," he attempts to integrate the evidence regarding the nature of Guru Nanak's personality provided by the *Janamsakhis* on the one hand and the *Adi Granth* on the other.

It is understandable that McLeod's study has evoked some very negative reactions. I suggest that the orthodox Sikh objection to his, "historical" approach is all the more emphatic because of the traditional Sikh sense of history, in which the lives and teachings of the Gurus form an important part of the Sikh faith. The secular historian's judgement that a particular recorded event is impossible or improbable is for the believer an act of desecration, the denial of part of that reality of the Guru's life and teaching that is the entrance portal of Sikh faith in the One who is Supreme and Eternal.

This sense of history has often been considered by Western students of religion to be particularly characteristic of Western religions and to be noticeably absent in the Indian religious consciousness, which has been held to be concerned with eternal truths, rather than with particular events in history. Some Indian scholars, too, have accepted this distinction. Certainly, there is a considerable difference in the emphasis on historical persons and events in the faith of different religious communities. The emphasis of the Sikh community on its own historical past is patent, but I suggest that something of this same sense is present in other Indian religious movements whenever the founding teacher is considered by his followers to have opened a new channel of divine grace that redeems their lives. The life of the founding teacher—what he did, what he said, who he was—becomes a new means for the new human community of his followers to relate themselves rightly to eternal reality, and to one another. In many cases this means not only the firmer establishment of a hope for the ultimate salvation beyond this life but also an active reordering of the conditions of this life to bring it into accord with *dharmā*.

This sense of the historical importance of the First Guru and of the line of the Gurus is stronger in some groups than in others, and there is a corresponding difference in the development of hagiography (the writing and study of the lives of the saints). For the purpose of comparison, I should like to consider one Hindu community in which this historical sense and the corresponding interest in the lives of their saints and teachers is rather highly developed. This is the Hindu community about which I know most: the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya of South India.

The great *acharya* of the Sri Vaishnavas, Ramanuja, has been regarded by his followers as the one who fulfilled the prophecy of the Tamil poet-saint Nammalvar that this degenerate age (the *Kaliyuga*) would come to an end. This is almost certainly not just a later glorification, for in what seems to be an Ode to Ramanuja by one of his own converts (Tiruvarangattu Amudanar), Ramanuja to this extent may be taken as the hyperbole characteristic of a hymn of praise (*stotra*). Certainly, Sri Vaishnavas do not believe that the present evil age has already ended or even that they themselves are removed in this life from its cares. They have, indeed, denied the Advaitin ideal of *jivanmukti*, complete release from transient and imperfect existence (*samsara*) before the soul leaves its present physical body. However, the work of Ramanuja, not only his writing and public debates, but also his gathering and nurturing of disciples and his reformation of temple-worship, is considered to have broadened and strengthened the community of God's servants who share in God's special grace extended to Ramanuja and are, thus, assured of their salvation. For those standing under God's protection (*rakshana*), enjoying the moments of intimate communion with him, and already

anticipating in their daily worship their role as members of God's heavenly chorus of praise, the power of *Kaliyuga* has, indeed, been ended, and they attempt in their daily lives to live in the age of *dharma*.

The Sri Vaishnava traditional history starts long before Ramanuja starts with poet-saints called Alvars, continues with the first two great *acharyas*, Nathamuni and Yamuna, but devotes the largest section to the life of Ramanuja. It is called the *Guruparampara-prabhavam*. The first written collection of these biographical stories in prose is called the *Six Thousand*. The stories are told in the Sanskritized Tamil of the thirteenth-century Sri Vaishnavas, and the collection was made about one hundred and fifty years after Ramanuja's death. This was just before the definitive break between the two schools of Sri Vaishnavas, the Vadagalais and Tegalais ("northern culture" and "southern culture" respectively). The Vadagalais regarded the *Six Thousand* as a sectarian Tegalai work and a century later produced a briefer version called the *Three Thousand*, which follows roughly the same outline but differs in a number of details from the earlier works. There are also two Sanskrit poems claimed to be by Ramanuja's immediate disciples, one in general agreement with the *Six Thousand* and one with the *Three Thousand*, but the latter is almost certainly spurious and the former may not be by a contemporary. There are also a number of much later biographies. The one best known in the rest of India, the *Prapannamrita*, was written four hundred years after Ramanuja. This biography contains a good deal of establishment of the earlier accounts in the light of pious imagination, but it also seems to reflect some additional oral traditions that shed additional light on the caste relationships between Ramanuja's immediate followers.

The modern treatments of Sri Vaishnava history written by Sri Vaishnavas themselves have sometimes drawn on the traditions of both the Tegalai and Vadagalai schools. There has been an increasing amount of literary and historical criticism, but the negative judgements have generally been made concerning the traditions of the other school from that of an author.

No Western scholars have so far thoroughly studied the Sri Vaishnava tradition. It appears that Western historians have not been interested in an area of history where they see so few "hard facts." This indifference to the biographical tradition reflects an attitude that is even more sceptical than McLeod's, since nothing at all in these traditions is regarded worthy of consideration as historical facts. Or perhaps this neglect simply reflects the despair of Western scholars, students of religion as well as historians of sifting out the historically reliable data from the great mass of biographical traditions. Whatever the motive, the result has been to ignore important aspects of the Sri Vaishnava movement, for there are significant events to be studied even when the sources of information are hard to evaluate.

Walter Neeval and I are now preparing an article in which we would

discuss the problems and the opportunities present in utilizing the Sri Vaishnava biographical traditions and in relating them to the literary works of the community. We both feel strongly the inadequacy of the usual Western approach of treating Indian religious figures solely on the basis of the evidence afforded by their writings. McLeod has in this respect had a more comprehensive approach than many Western students of Indian religions. In his attempt to delineate the personality of Guru Nanak, he has studied both the biographies and the literary compositions. Unfortunately, his application of rationalist historicist standards in evaluating the Janamsakhis deprives him of most of the very evidence he seeks concerning the nature of Guru Nanak's personality, for this evidence seems to me most clearly to be found in the impact of the Guru on his immediate followers and those of the following generations.

In a talk at the University of Madras last year, I suggested that there were three "pictures" of Ramanuja that the student of religion ought to take into account. The first picture is the only one that has so far been examined by Western students: that provided by the *acharya's* own writings, and recently Dr Robert Lester has suggested reducing even this picture by rejecting the authenticity of four short devotional works that stand between the emphases in Ramanuja's more philosophical works and those in subsequent Sri Vaishnava theology. Yet there are also, I believe, at least two other "pictures." The first is the one I have been discussing in this paper: the evidence regarding what Ramanuja did and said from the biographical tradition and from the closely related collection of the Tamil sayings of the Sri Vaishnava *acharyas*. There are also some interesting comments of Ramanuja preserved in some of the massive commentaries by Ramanuja's successors on the great philosophical hymn of Nammalvar, the *Tiruvaymoli*. Although these commentaries were passed on in oral tradition for about two hundred years before being fixed in writing, they are so characteristic of the emphasis of Ramanuja's Sanskrit writings that I believe they must be genuine. There are many sayings in the biographies, on the other hand, that seem quite different from the Sanskrit writings, and some of them almost certainly do not go back to Ramanuja. We should not too hastily conclude, however, that whatever does not accord fully with the Sanskrit writings is not authentic, for the comments in those writings, most of them commentaries, are greatly affected by the text upon which he is commenting and by the tradition of previous commentaries that he is following. There is, moreover, the distinct possibility that when Ramanuja was conversing with his disciples in Tamil, he expressed himself quite differently from what he did in Sanskrit writings intended to withstand the scrutiny of those of the rival schools. The possibility that he gave "secret teachings" (*rahasyārtha*) to his advanced disciples is one that needs to be considered, though we need to bear in mind the biographers' own evidence to Ramanuja's general openness in his teaching.

The third picture of Ramanuja that I suggested should be considered is the reflecting of his teaching and personality in the writings and teachings of his followers, especially, though not exclusively, his immediate disciples. There are a few introductory verses acknowledging the disciples' dependence on their *acharya*, but what concerns me here is the evident impact of Ramanuja's ideas, and sometimes of his words and phrases on the writings of his followers. Sometimes, the picture thus reflected is further sharpened by the contrasts between the teacher and the student, especially in style. This is particularly striking in the case of Ramanuja's gifted disciple and "secretary," Kuresa, whose writings show remarkable originality in his way of expressing them, specially in expressing in verse the concepts that Ramanuja delineated in prose.

This proposal to look at three pictures of Ramanuja before attempting one's own scholarly picture of his personality will seem rather dubious to many Western historians. It will seem obvious, on the other hand, to orthodox Sri Vaishnavas, who have never seen any conflict between the first and the second pictures and who would take the third picture as a matter of course, since all the *acharyas* of the orthodox line agree. What I am suggesting, however, is not that the three pictures will agree in every particular, but that they will complement one another, even where they seem to disagree.

It is the second picture of Guru Nanak, and for comparative purposes, of the Sri Vaishnava *acharya* Ramanuja, on which I should like to focus attention in this paper. The student of religion, especially when he stands outside the faith that he is studying, needs to give special attention to the biographical traditions concerning those spiritual leaders who have helped to shape the faith of that community. Yet however sympathetic his attitude, it is hard to see how it can be precisely that of the orthodox believer. The Smarta Hindu historians take a much more positive view of Sri Vaishnava traditions than do most Western scholars, but there are points where they, too, are critical of the traditions, and the same is true of university-trained historians within the Sri Vaishnava community. Most historians are looking for "objective facts," whether they accept ninety percent or reject ninety percent and accept ten percent. In any case, they adopt an attitude that is quite contrary to that of the traditional believer, who accepts the tradition as an undivided whole, and the result of their historical sifting of the traditions, whether moderate or radical, is likely to be deeply offensive to that believer, especially if he regards his communal history an essential part of his own religious faith.

The problem that is beginning to face the Sikhs will soon face the Sri Vaishnavas : the critical sifting of their historical traditions by rationalist historians, and it will face other Hindu *bhakti* movements that take their religious history seriously. Indeed, a few years ago there was quite an outcry by orthodox Bengali Vaishnavas about a new

biography of Chaitanya that challenged some orthodox traditions. Is there any way in which scholars, especially the students of religion, can avoid the clash between the so-called traditionalist and the so-called modern treatments of religious history?

This problem has faced Judaism and Christianity for the last two hundred years, and a great deal of heated controversy has taken place. Dr Dawe has discussed at some length in his paper some aspects of the present thinking on this subject by Protestant Biblical scholars and theologians. I do not believe that they have solved this particular problem. Indeed, some of the students of Rudolf Bultmann have initiated a "new quest of the historical Jesus." Yet the present New Testament scholars have at least shown that the task of the historian of religion is vastly more complicated than was assumed by the historicist Biblical scholars at the beginning of this century and is still assumed by many secular historians today. In many cases, one simply cannot separate the "hard facts" of what Jesus said and did from the memory of these facts treasured by his disciples and recounted by them. Miracles, which are the first thing that the rationalist historian rejects as unhistorical, are often the clearest indication of the impact on the minds and hearts of the disciples of a powerful religious personality.

I do not personally agree, however, with an approach to any historical religious personality that simply abandons the effort to discover and understand that person and contents itself with analysing the stages in the development of a religious community's thinking about its past leader. This latter study is certainly important and there may be cases where the scholar can do no more, but even the outside student of a religious community, who does not share its distinctive faith ought to be interested in getting as close as he can to that historical person who is the formulator or reformulator of the faith of that community and source of a new chapter in that community's development.

All the religious communities in the world are entering an era of human history in which it is not only physically possible to invite guests from the other side of the world to such a memorable anniversary celebration as this, but also religiously appropriate to invite those who live in different and sometimes rival worlds of religious meaning. For those religious communities that treasure the memory of their founders and their historical past, it also means that they bring their own historical traditions into a universal world of scholarship in which their scrutiny by those outside the community is not only permitted but welcomed. It is at this point that a problem arises—a problem that is but one aspect of attempting to live together and learn from one another in a multi-religious world. The Western philosopher and the theologian have often been too confident of their capacity to understand the universal history of man, and the Western historian has been too confident of his methods of determining the "hard facts." We are still in the early stages of

understanding human history and developing an adequate historiography. Certainly, we are at a very early and imperfect stage in the study of one another's religions. I would suggest that the outside historian and the loyal adherent of a particular tradition need to bear with one another as we proceed in the process of mutual understanding. We shall not always agree on what accounts are probable or merely possible, on what is fact and what is legend, but we may be able to learn from one another more of what history is about and more about the Transcendent Source of what is most genuinely human and historical. Surely, it is appropriate to pledge ourselves to this mutual forbearance as a community of scholars as we gather together to do homage to a great teacher who was so clearly within human history and so clearly pointed beyond it to the Eternal One.

XXXIX

THE POETRY OF GURU NANAK

DARSHAN SINGH MAINI

Of all the forms of literature, poetry alone seems capable of embodying the primordial and subliminal aspects of reality. There are, indeed, some areas of man's experience which border on the suprarational and the inexplicable, as it were, and these may not be cast into any literary mould except that of poetry. When one does come across such states of the mind and the soul in fiction, it is not difficult to see that the novelists in question have really pressed into service a poetical imagination. The language turns metaphorical and hieroglyphic even as the images begin to grow into archetypes and symbols. In other words, there is something in the very nature and genius of poetry which answers to the deep and the dark and the unknown in us. However, though all poetic states have a touch of the twilight about them, religious poetry in particular grapples with the intangible and arcane, with the ineffable, in short. There is a view, which amongst others, was held by Dr Johnson that religious poetry *per se* could not exist, because a genuinely religious experience or state discounted utterance. Such a view obviously has only a grain of truth in it, for the whole body of religious poetry in England from Milton and Blake to Hopkins and Eliot, or of European poetry from Dante downwards suggests that it is triumphantly viable. Dr Johnson did not seem to realize that religious experience, too, had an aesthetic core, and that it clamoured for articulation.

I have said all this because in any discussion of religious poetry, Oriental or Occidental, we are bound to come up against certain peculiar difficulties. Since the nature of religio-aesthetic experience is fundamentally indivisible, I have tried to touch upon the problem in the context of a poetry with which I am a little more familiar.

I am aware of the fact that the Western poets I have mentioned in passing produced an order of religious verse which, except for some epiphanies here and there, does not have the quality of piety we associate with Guru Nanak's poetry, or, for that matter, with scriptural poetry as such. This would appear to suggest that beyond religious poetry we have had from the beginning, both in East and in West, the poetry of prophecy. Here again, I wish to add that I am not referring to the type of "prophetic"

edge we may find, say, in a great poem like "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats. I am talking at the moment only of the poetry which issued from the mouth of a prophet, and has been consecrated in scripture. Usually, a poet conscious of the problems of technique, architectonics, etc., seldom scales the heights of spiritual experience attained by the prophets in their moments of free and spontaneous utterance. Perhaps we could call the Blakean or Yeatsian poetry visionary, and the poetry of the Bible, the Quran, the Gita and the Guru Granth prophetic or oracular. Professor Puran Singh, one of the most outstanding Punjabi poets of the present century, does regard the poet as "the Guru, the Master, the Buddha, the Christ" in his *Spirit of Oriental Poetry* (Kegan Paul, London), and would put Walt Whitman in that hallowed category, but obviously in his poetic euphoria, he did not draw a line between the poetry of vision and the poetry of prophecy.

II

Guru Nanak's poetry, then, has to be considered as a poetry in which the word has changed into the *Logos*. It is the summit of human expression, and the tools of literary criticism, such as we have, are woefully inadequate, where the poetry of prophetic experience is concerned. Nevertheless, it will be my endeavour in this short paper to draw your attention to some of the leading themes and *motifs*, as also to some of the felicities, enchantments and graces of his *Bani*. This, then, is more a tribute than an evaluation. Any attempt to follow the flight of the winged word to the highest reaches of supra-reality can only cause a critical vertigo.

A few other preliminaries have to be stated, before I try to give you an idea of his soulful compositions. It is not clear, to begin with, how Guru Nanak's poetic utterances which were not written down on paper by him came finally to be gathered in the *Guru Granth*. Legend has it that he was frequently accompanied by one scribe or another during his travels, and that a number of hymns were taken down *verbatim* as they issued from the Guru's mouth. One scribe, named Saido, has been mentioned in some old *Janamsakhis* or biographical sketches. Maha Kavi Santokh Singh, in his *Gur Pratap Suraj*, avers that it was one Mansukh who enjoyed the unique privilege of transcribing the Guru's *Bani*. Whatever the real position, one thing is clear; the Guru's divine songs composed in a state of rapture or ecstasy and sung to the accompaniment of Mardana's *rebec* became instantly the voice of the Lord for the laity and the pundits alike. No wonder, they were reverentially recited again and again, and achieved the status of oracular poetry. It was easy enough for the succeeding four Gurus and thousands of their devotees to remember the bardic verse by heart till the Fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, who had in his possession in manuscript form the compositions of the preceding Gurus, incorporated it in the *Guru Granth*, discarding such interpolations as had found their way into

it. Again, though Guru Nanak effected some subtle changes in the classical metrics, he was not a poet who polished his verses to perfection in the privacy of his room or study. However, this is not to say, he was not conscious of his poetic ministry. In fact, for him, the music of the words and the music of "the unstruck melodies" alone constituted divinity. He calls himself a *dhadi*, a *shair* engaged in craft. But in the final analysis he considered himself a medium, a vessel:

"I broadcast what I receive from the Lord" (*Rag Tilang*). The sheer volume of this splendid poetry — 958 hymns to be more exact — shows that Guru Nanak was no occasional poet, though some of the compositions such as *Siddha Goshti* and, what has come to be known as, *Babarvani* were occasioned by the events of the day. What spurred him into song, to use a Yeatsian expression, was as much the divine from within as the contemporary reality that impinged forcefully upon his roused consciousness. Here was, indeed, a devout consummation of the prophetic and the mundane in a manner that rendered the latter equally moving and great.

The first thing to grasp about Guru Nanak's poetry is the fact that the bardic verse of the saints and seers had a long and rich tradition in India. This poetry had by his time achieved a distinctive character. Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev, and other poets of the Bhakti movement with whose compositions Guru Nanak was apparently well acquainted had evolved patterns or moulds of religious verse which, because of their use of the *patois* or the vernacular, had a heart-warming intimacy about them. Similarly, a Sufi poet like Farid had earlier sung hymns in the Punjabi dialect of the day. The idiom and imagery of amour and inebriation had given this type of mystic verse a unique ardour and flavour. Guru Nanak's poetry subsumed all those intensities and affirmations. In effecting a synthesis between the two parallel movements of Bhakti and Sufi verse it reached a point of convergence where it took off vertically, so to speak, and developed its own *elan* and metrics. Not only did it show many a new strain and *motif*, it also revealed a new order of mystical imagination. Guru Nanak's heart yearning for the Eternal and the Infinite found its spiritual correlative in hymns which were fashioned in the smithy of the soul. George Herbert, a well-known English metaphysical poet of the seventeenth century, came very close to describing the process in the following lines:

The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords
When the soul unto the lines accords.

III

A conjectural classification of Guru Nanak's poetic output has been attempted, and on the basis of both external and internal evidence, three distinct periods have been tentatively fixed. As we shall see, his divine muse was from the beginning in quest of fresh fields of experience and

reality. From period to period, or from phase to phase, it gathered new overtones, showing a graph of perceptible poetic development, both in theme and technique. The depth and richness and splendour of the verse composed towards the end would tend to support the view that the growth of his muse was integrally related to the growth of his spiritual vision. The movement of the verse, then, is from the horizontal to the vertical, from the personal and the subjective to the impersonal and the universal, from the polemical and the rhetorical to the devotional and the mystical, from the didactic and the hortatory to the tangential and the symbolic. On the whole, the poetry remains lyrical, mellifluous and figurative till the end, though it becomes more austere, controlled and majestic *en route*. Which is not to say, it lacked mystic fervour at the outset; on the contrary, even the verses uttered by Guru Nanak in his early teens have the quality of prophetic inevitability about them. Only, as was natural, the later verses embodied more advanced and inaccessible states of the mind and the soul.

The first period (1469-1498) witnesses a harvest of youthful and revolutionary verse directed chiefly against the ritualistic and hypocritical clergy and the temporal powers steeped in sin. One recalls, for instance, the lines uttered by the schoolboy Nanak when he questioned the credentials of his teacher whose learning was more a millstone round his neck than a liberating or enlightening force. He served him a sermon instead:

Burn worldly love, grind its ashes
And make it into ink;
Turn superior intellect into paper.
Make divine love thy pen, and thy heart the writer,
Ask thy guru and write his instruction.
Write God's name, write His praises,
Write that He hath neither end nor limit

(Macauliffe's Translation)

Or, consider for a moment, the answer he gave to the bewildered family priest who had sought to sell him the idea of the *janeu* or the sacred thread:

Make mercy thy cotton, contentment thy thread, continence its knot,
truth its twist.
That would make a *janeu* for the soul;
If thou have it, O Brahman, then put it on me.
It will not break, or become soiled, or be burned, or lost.
Blest the man, O Nanak, who goeth with such a thread on his neck...

(Macauliffe's Translation)

The village physician, he addressed thus:

The physician is sent for to prescribe remedy;
He taketh my hand and feeleth my pulse.
The ignorant physician knoweth not that it's in my mind the pain is.
Physician, go home, take not my curse with thee.
I am imbued with my Lord, to whom givest thou medicine ... ?
Let's make penitence the paper, Thy name,
O Lord, the prescription...

(Macauliffe's Translation)

One feature of his poetry which is perceptible in these youthful poems of protest is his persistent and protracted use of figurative, particularly metaphorical, language. This idiomatic quality, we find, assumes for the maturer poet, a deep semantic and philosophical significance. The dominant form of expression in the first period is *slokas* or the couplets which often have a sharp, satirical tang. Their aphoristic verve, however, does not diminish the quality of the dream which we find constantly in his early poetry. Also, his revolutionary humanism, which leavened his poetry till the end, is unmistakably evident.

The second period (1498-1521) is roughly the period of his missionary travels, and the hymns uttered or composed during those years show Guru Nanak's wide awareness of the contemporary reality. His long and frequent sojourns suggest his deep desire to acquaint himself with as many peoples, cultures and religions as possible. There was in him an infinite thirst for truth which will not let him rest, as it were. He composed a great deal of polemical verse during that period, for he was often engaged in dialogue with the learned pundits, *mullahs* and priests of the day. Once again, the themes are barren ritualism, false splendour and false values, the futility of inhuman intellection, logic-chopping, etc. However, already songs of a more metaphysical and devotional nature, dealing with the reality of God, the soul, the creation and the Name are on the lips of the Guru. A shift in theme and style is well under way. The dominant aspect is still the rhetorical, though tender lyrics of godly passion have made their appearance. We also find the poet borrowing apposite and telling phrases from Sindhi, Marathi, Persian, Arabic and other languages to heighten the effect of his hymns.

When in the holy city of Kurukshetra, the Brahmins expatiated upon the horrors of eating flesh, Guru Nanak observed thus:

Man is first conceived in flesh, he dwelleth in flesh.
 When he quickeneth, he obtaineth a mouth of flesh;
 His bone, skin, and body are made of flesh
 When he is taken out of the womb, he seizeth teats of flesh.
 His mouth is of flesh, his tongue is of flesh, his breath is in flesh.
 When he groweth up he marrieth,
 And bringeth flesh home with him;
 Flesh is produced from flesh;
 All man's relations are made from flesh.

(Macauliffe's Translation)

When after his visit to Kamrup he was offered worldly temptations, the Guru broke out into this song:

Were a mansion of pearls erected
 And inlaid with gems for me;
 Perfumed with musk, saffron, fragrant aloes
 And sandal to confer delight;

May it not be that on beholding these things
 I may forget Thee,
 O God, and not remember Thy name!
 My soul burneth without Thee.
 Were fascinating damsels whose faces
 Were decked with jewels to shed lustre
 And enhance the pleasure of the scene,
 May it not be that on beholding them
 I may forget Thee and not remember Thy name!

(Macauliffe's Translation)

However, it is the poetry of the third period (1521-1539) which constitutes the crowning glory of his genius. All the major *Banis* such as the *Japji*, the *Vars*, the *Patti*, the *Tithaan*, the *Siddha Goshti*, and possibly the *Sohle* and the *Chhants* were composed by Guru Nanak in the plenitude of his spiritual and poetic powers. After his pilgrim soul had had a full measure of the world, he settled down at Kartarpur, and it was mostly there that the poetry of splendid apostrophes and epiphanies was born. He brought a rich and varied experience, a prescient mind, and an ardent imagination to bear upon the verses which now appeared in profusion. Though some of the poems still have traces of the earlier polemical and didactic verse, the new compositions are, by and large, more philosophical. They have an air of ease and assurance.

These poems centre upon the *motifs* of God's Grace, meditation on His Name, the nature of the Ineffable, fear of God, *hukam* and *raza* or the Will of the Lord, time and mortality, hell and heaven, *karma* and predestination, *dukha* or suffering, evil and the necessity of action, transmigration, *haumai* or ego, moral reason and social ethics, polity and public weal, the splendour of Nature, the sanctity of the body, etc. Obviously, the poetry of the final phase which comprehends theological doctrines, metaphysical and suprarational reality, mystical experience, economic and social necessity, the flesh-soul relationship, etc., is a body of verse which in the ambit of its interests and in the quality or grain of its fineness equals, to my mind, the greatest religious poetry of the world. No translation of the verse can ever convey its vastness and heights, its depth and profundity. Poetry *per se* is untranslatable, and when it happens to be a poetry of prophecy, the task is well-nigh impossible. One may at best struggle with the sense of the lines and the complexmetrics based on the classical Indian *ragas*; one may not be drawn to the point where all literary cunning shrivels up, and renders the effort pitiable, if not grotesque.

The *Japji*, which is recited every morning by the devout Sikhs, is a long poem of 38 *pauris* or stanzas, and is the quintessence of Guru Nanak's achieved vision and art. Its *Mul Mantra* or preamble, which is repeated in almost every *Bani* in its full or its abridged form, is the theological basis of all Sikh scriptures:

There is one God,
 Eternal Truth is His Name;
 Maker of all things,
 Fearing nothing and at enmity with nothing,
 Timeless is His Image;
 Not begotten, being of His own being
 By the grace of the Guru, made known to man.

(*The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, UNESCO)

Most of the major themes of his later poetry find a triumphant expression in the *Japji*. To begin with, God's essence is sought to be defined, though the ineffable, we learn, remains unrendered, despite all our idiomatic ingenuity and intellectual sophistry. The Godhead is basically inexplicable and "passeth understanding." Man fashioned in the Will of the Lord and given primacy amongst all created objects and beings remains yoked to the wheel of death and birth eternally until redeemed by His grace. Nothing exists outside his Will, and nothing abides but His Name. The Word or *Logos* issues from God and constitutes the primal reality. "With one Word He ordered the Universe into being."

From the nature of the Godhead, Guru Nanak goes on to illustrate the glory of the Creation which extends over millions of earths and skies, millions of suns and moons, millions of sentient forms and figures. The human imagination boggles at the immensity and magnitude of the geometry of the Universe, and is fascinated by the dapple and dazzle of the "many-splendoured" world. Man's creatureliness is emphasized again and again as against the Lord's infinite might, tenderness and mercy. Moral reason is suggested as one of the ways leading to salvation, for man's life is a strict summary of his deeds and their consequences.

So long as one keeps burning in the fire of lusts, or remains a slave to corrosive appetites, there is no deliverance from pain and suffering. The only way to end the state of *dukha* is to train one's sensibility in the Will of the Lord.

The conquest of the mind is the conquest of the world.
 Or
 Make continence thy furnace, resignation thy goldsmith,
 Understanding thy anvil, divine knowledge thy tools,
 The fear of God thy bellows, austerities thy fire,
 Divine love thy crucible, and melt God's name therein,
 In such a true mint the Word shall be coined.

(*Macauliffe's Translation*)

The *Japji* concludes, as it begins, with a splendid apostrophe to the miracle of the Godhead and the Creation:

The air is the guru, water our father,
 And the great earth our mother;
 Day and night are our two nurses, male and female,
 Who set the whole world aplaying.

(*Macauliffe's Translation*)

The *Japji* shows Guru Nanak's encyclopaedic knowledge of Hindu philosophy and mythology, of Semitic doctrines and practices, of ascetic schools of thought and theology, of Indian history and heritage, of the contemporary socio-political reality. Though the form is not epical, but that of metaphysical lyrics, the effect of vastness, grandeur and loftiness is achieved because of the sublime imagination which is at work throughout this great composition.

The poetic qualities of the *Japji* include extreme condensation, verbal reiteration, indirection, allusion, interrogation, symbolism, etc. The rhetorical style of the earlier *slokas* is not much in evidence; on the contrary, the style now has an austere beauty and aphoristic dignity about it.

Metaphors continue to be the dominant form of expression though they, too, have undergone a chemical change. They are no longer mere embellishments, as in the verses of other poets around him; they have become a semantic and structural approach to the understanding of reality. In fact, they have a profoundly cognitive character. The triple metaphors of the smithy, the crucible and the mint; of the parchment, the ink and the pen; of the ocean, the ferry and the oar; of the earth, the seed and the fruit; of the lamp, the oil and the wick; of the potter, the vessel and the wheel; of the father, the mother, and the child, etc., make the *Japji*, as also nearly all the compositions of his advanced age, a poetry of complex verbal and phenomenological relationships. The imagery of trade and commerce, of profit and loss, of the weighing balance and the merchandise would suggest the personal and experiential base of this poetry.

And this brings me finally to the poetry of the *ragas*. The division of Guru Nanak's poetry along the classical Indian *ragas* appears at first sight somewhat arbitrary, for one finds certain sentiments and thoughts, as also their rendering, repeated in the verses belonging to different *ragas* or categories of music. However, a careful analysis will show that the verse placed under a particular category is in strict accord with the spirit and genius of the *raga* in question. The repetition alluded to above is inevitable to an extent because of the overlapping thematic and structural areas of a few *ragas*, in particular. Guru Nanak's understanding of the framework and grammar of Indian classical music was profound, and of the 31 *ragas* listed in the *Guru Granth*, he used as many as 20 including *Rag Behagra*. It is remarkable how he employed the profane and erotic *motifs* of the *ragas* to achieve the mystical "breakthrough."

Each classical *raga* has its own rationale and dialectics. It is set or written strictly in conformity with the nature of the delicate emotion or sentiment to be expressed. It has a locale in time and space, and it alone can render the nuances and nostalgia of the sentiment, the season and the hour. It has its own unique atmosphere or aura and its own peculiar poetic graces. Thus we have *Rag Asa* or "The Songs of Hope" to be sung in the morning and the evening against the background of

winter. Similarly, we have *Rag Wadhans* or "The Songs of the Urge for the Lord," *Rag Gauri* or "The Songs of Seriousness," *Rag Sorath* or "The Songs of Darkness," *Rag Dhanasri* or "The Songs of Separation," *Rag Basant* or "The Songs of Spring," etc.

Though, as I have said above, the themes and *motifs* change from *raga* to *raga*, a few common features of Guru Nanak's poetry written thus may be seen. The style and the metaphors of the *Japji* may, with slight variation, be seen at work once again. The Guru's love of Nature, though present in his poetry from the beginning, assumes a profoundly mystical character. The imagery of flowers and foliage, of birds and animals, of rivers and pools, of clouds and rain has a lyrical grace which is unique in Punjabi poetry. There are few Wordsworthian sermons here; the sheer opulence of Nature suffices.

However, the thing that impresses one most in the poetry of the *ragas* is the skilful and changing use of the archetypal metaphor of the spouse and the Lord. This metaphor, in fact, persists in his poetry all through, but now it becomes an ineluctable medium of the union with God. Man, the spouse, yearning for the touch of the Master, filling the universe with felicities when He is around, and with tender songs of separation when He is away, can only realize his spiritual consummation by his merger in the Lord. The bridal imagery of these songs, rich and ornate, would indicate, among other things, the importance Guru Nanak attached to the beauty and sanctity of the human body. As against the monks and *siddhas* of his day who regarded it as the seat of sins, he affirms its primal purity. Like so many mystic poets, he celebrates the body's rapture which at the moment of the union is inseparable from the rapture of the soul.

I quote below a few lines from *Rag Wadhans* to show how the Guru having been united with the Lord in his dreams wakes up to feel acutely the pangs of separation.

The peacocks are crying with joy;
O sisters, the rainy season hath come.
The fervent woman, O God, is enamoured
Of Thy glances which bind her as if with a rope.
I am a sacrifice to a sight of Thee,
O God; to Thy name I am a sacrifice.
Since Thou art my Master I am proud;
Without Thee what pride should I have?
O woman, break thy couch with its frame
And thine arm with their bracelets
Since, notwithstanding thy decorations,
The Lord is enamoured of others.
Thou needest not a bangle-dealer,
Or silver, or gold bracelets:
Burn the arm which embraceth not the Bridegroom.
All my companions went to enjoy the Bridegroom;
Whose door shall I, wretched that I am, approach?

O Lord, I think myself well-behaved and very clever,
 Yet I have no charm to please Thee.
 I plaited my tresses with cosmetic and
 Filled the parting of my hair with vermillion;
 Yet when I went before Thee I was not accepted;
 I shall die of excessive grief.
 I am weeping; the whole world weepeth; yea,
 Even the birds of the forests weep for me.
 One thing weepeth not for me, the separation
 Which parted me from my Beloved.
 He came to me in my dreams and again vanished,
 Upon which I wept my fill.
 I cannot go to Thee, O Beloved, or send anyone to Thee.
 Return, O happy sleep, perhaps I may again behold my Lord.
 What shall I give him, saith Nanak,
 Who telleth me of Thee, O God?
 I will cut off my head and give it to him to sit on;
 Without my head I will perform his service.
 Why do I not die and give up my life
 Since my Lord hath chosen another?

(Macauliffe's Translation)

It may perhaps be wrongly concluded from this brief account of the changing spectrum of his poetry that Guru Nanak towards the end had set his eyes on the stars, and that the poetry of protest and political awareness which he had composed in his younger days had lost its edge or urgency for him. His hymns, which comprise what has come to be known as *Babarvani*, composed after Babar's invasion of India in 1526, show, as few other poems of the period do, his boundless feeling of pity and humanity. As he saw the rapacious and predatory soldiery lay waste a beautiful land and a great culture, as he saw the Indian women deflowered and despoiled, and the Indian temples desecrated, a cry of infinite anguish broke out from his lacerated heart :

Babar ruled over Khurasan and hath terrified Hindustan.
 The Creator taketh no blame to Himself;
 It was Death disguised as a Mughal who made war on us.
 When there was such slaughter and lamentation,
 Didst not Thou, O God, feel pain?
 Creator, Thou belongest to all.
 If a tyrant slay a tyrant, one is not angry;
 But if a ravening lion fall on a herd,
 Its master should show his manliness.

(Macauliffe's Translation)

"The poetry is in the pity," said Wilfred Owen, an English poet of the First World War. The quality of pity in *Babarvani* makes these superb lyrics some of the greatest war poems in the world.

The poetry of Guru Nanak comprehends, as I have tried to show, the highest reaches of human thought and emotion. The rising arc of its

sublimity intersects several planes of reality. In fact, it's this continual interplay of the aesthetic, moral, humanistic and mystical imaginations which gives it a compulsive charm. Though the voice that uttered these hymns of breathless beauty is gone, the word abides. It has the quality of eternity about it.

XL

SEER, SAINT AND REDEEMER

HARNAM SINGH SHAN

Pure he was, so purity he preached
Lovely he was, so love he preached
Humble he was, so humility he preached
Divine he was, so divinity he preached.¹

Guru Nanak is widely known and highly respected as a prophet, a seer, a saint, a saviour, a redeemer, a divine master, a spiritual preceptor. He enjoyed so much reverence and popularity even in his own lifetime that his name became a legend, both at home and abroad. The religious-minded of his own country and community, calling him "Nanak Deva" and interpreting *Deva* as "God," considered him God on the earth or an *Avatar*—an incarnation of God. He was acclaimed as *Pir-i-Hind*² in the Muslim world abroad, and his name still stands inscribed as *Hazrat-Rab-i-Majid Baba Nanak Faqir Aulia* on a memorial in Baghdad,³ the citadel of Muslim culture. At home, while his Hindu devotees called him *Satguru*⁴ Nanak Dev, the Muslims called him *Hazrat*⁵ Nanak Shah, thus vying with each other to proclaim him as their own in his name and appellation, too. The laymen, particularly of the Indian subcontinent, have all along been remembering him as *Baba*, the Grandfather Nanak. People of all castes and callings still revere him as the *Guru* of the Hindus and the *Pir* of the Muslims, cherished as such in the following verse :

Guru Nanak Shah Faqir
Hindu ka Guru, Musalman ka Pir.

His first biographer, the highly learned Bhai Gurdas, has described him as *Akal-roop* (Godlike)⁶ and *Jagat-Gur-Baba* (i.e. the Divine World Teacher).⁷ He has also stated in his most popular verse that "God, the benefactor, heard the cry of the suffering humanity and sent him to the world"⁸ and that "with his advent, the mist of ignorance and sham disappeared from the world and light spread everywhere."⁹ The holy compiler and editor of his sacred writings, Guru Arjan Dev, called him 'Guru-God'¹⁰ and observed:

What to say of me, the ignorant one, millions of sinners have been saved by his instruction. Whosoever happened to see or hear him, was saved from the ordeal of being cast into the womb again.¹¹

His earliest-known biography has also described him as 'Guru-God,' addressed as such by God himself:

Nanak, whoever shall be blessed by you, shall be blessed by me, too. My name is 'Parbrahm-Parmeshar' (The Supreme Spirit-God) and your name is 'Gur-Parmeshar' (Guru-God).¹²

According to Sodhi Meharban "He does not look like a man of the world. He is not a faqir either. He is some great man who seems to have had the privilege of meeting God. To our good luck, we are meeting in him God himself."¹³

Sohan Singh also tells us that whosoever met him, particularly during the last phase of his life, said that "never in their lives had they seen a man so near to God."¹⁴ Yes, he was very much near to God, rather one with Him; yet he was a man, first and last a man, though a unique man, indeed! He never claimed himself to be a saint or a seer, a saviour or a redeemer, much less Almighty God or God-incarnate. He did not arrogate to himself any attribute of God in the absolute sense. As a matter of fact, he did not claim for himself anything more than a human being. So much so that he is stated to have proclaimed, "I am composed of five elements and my name is Nanak."¹⁵ He, thus, always preferred to be known as 'man,' a man among men, about whom, including himself, he once said :

We are men of but one breath, and do not even know the span of our existence and the time of our death (*Dhanasari*, p. 660).

He was even so conscious of this that he made it clear a number of times in his own writings, preserved so far in their original and most authentic form. Referring once to the various remarks made about his person, misunderstanding his God-intoxication, he said :

Some call me a goblin, some a spirit. Some call me a mere forsaken man. But I, the mad Nanak, have lost my reason in pursuit of the King, God, and I know none other than God (*Maru*, 991).

His great emphasis on the oneness, immanence and transcendence of God, his creed of the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man are more than enough to prove that he never even thought of posing himself to be anything like that. His well-known definition and description of God reads:

How can a servant, a devoted and dedicated servant like Nanak, usurp that place of his Master who, according to him, is also the Supreme Master of the entire universe.

He rather called himself His slave, just one of His countless slaves, though a lucky one:

I am a bond-slave of the Lord and my name is lucky. I was sold at the Master's shop at His bidding and now I go the way He bids (*Maru*, 991).

Yes, he was lucky, because he was accepted by the Supreme Lord Himself as His own slave. Besides that, he claimed himself, three times in his writings, to be a "bard," but that, too, of God, the only True Lord. While doing so, he has, as usual, been quite humble and unpretentious:

"I am the Lord's bard of low-caste" (*Asa*, 468). He also mentioned himself as a "poet," at two places, and that, too, without any sense of pride or self-praise:

God does everything and causes others to do whatever He wills. He also knows everything, so says Nanak, the poet of the Lord (*Asa*, 434).

* * *

My breath, flesh and soul — all are Thine,
O Lord! To me Thou art extremely dear;
O Thou, the True Provider of all; so says
Nanak, the poet (*Dhanasari*, 660).

At times, he also called himself a pedlar of God:

I am a pedlar of my all-pervading Lord and deal only in the merchandise of His Name (*Gauri*, 158).

And at other times, a beggar, just a beggar of His vision at His gate:

With my hands as the begging-bowl,
I crave nothing but Thy vision
Which I beg day after day at Thy door.
Bless me Lord with Thy gracious sight,
I call as a beggar at Thy gate (*Tilang*, 721).

Moreover, all that he thought or uttered, he did in the name of God. He Himself stated, at least two times:

I spoke only when Thou, O God,
inspiredst me to speak (*Wadhans*, 566).

* * *

As the word comes to me, so I make
it known, O Lalo (*Tilang*, 722).

How could one so sincerely and intensely devoted to God, ever pose himself to be God or God-incarnate? How could a soul so dedicated to Him ever be misunderstood as proclaiming himself to be anything but "man?" He rather consistently and scrupulously avoided to claim any Divinity and Godhead for himself; and even went to the extent of proclaiming:

The immaculate Name of God alone is my sole base (*Asa*, 412).

By repeating God's Name I live;
By forgetting it, I die (*Asa*).

All that he confidently claimed for himself, on the other hand, was that he was a god-fearing, a god-intoxicated man:

Your fear, O God, is my hemp and my mind is the pouch, which holds it; and I have thus become intoxicated with Thy love (*Tilang*, 721).

Explaining that, too, he made it more than clear that

He, indeed, is mad who holds the Master dear and considers himself unworthy, and the rest of the world good (*Maru*, 991).

He also stated that he was a man commissioned by God. While describing his audience with the Supreme Lord, he sang out:

I was a bard out of work. God blessed me with His service and commanded me to sing His praises night and day. He summoned me to His eternal abode, bestowed on me the robe of the praise of His true Name and fed me with the Nectar-Name of the Great Truth (*Majh*, 150).

The earliest available record of this event of enlightenment and divine assignment, reads as under:

The Baba went to the Divine Court and received from there the gift of the priceless Name and sweet humility. From there he fixed a thoughtful gaze on the world below and found it ablaze in agony. There was no guide or teacher and a chaotic darkness prevailed all around. The whole humanity was crying in anguish. The Baba then donned the garb of a monk, laid the path of true renunciation, and set out for the reformation of the whole world and the regeneration of all mankind.¹⁷

III

Guru Nanak reverently and very frequently used two very typical and expressive names for God: *Kartar* (i.e. the Creator) and *Nirankar* (i.e. the Formless). As stated earlier,

Tui hae Nirankar Kartar
Nanak Banda tera¹⁸

was his most favourite and oft-repeated theme.

Guru Nanak founded a town and named it *Kartarpur* (the abode of the Creator), which later became his own abode during the last and most momentous phase of his life. This characteristic epithet became so popular that, according to Mohsin Fani (1615-1670), the first non-Sikh contemporary writer on Sikhism, his sons and disciples came to be known as *Kartari*,¹⁹ that is, the worshippers of *Kartar*, the Creator.

The epithet, *Nirankar*, too, was so frequently used by him that its continual utterance resounded all around and became his surname in its derivative form: *Nirankari* (from *Nirankar*), so much so that the Guru came to be known as *Nanak Nirankari*, that is, Nanak who is one with the Formless One. The following dialogue, recorded in Persian and said to have taken place between him and the famous Muslim faqir, Ali Yar at Qandhar, is quite revealing in this respect, and goes a long way to prove Guru Nanak's relation with God and his own position as His man and messenger:

Ali Yar: O Darvesh, where have you come from and what is your name?

Guru Nanak: I have come from the land of the Five Rivers and my name is Nanak *Nirankari*.

Ali Yar: I have not understood the meaning of the word *Nirankari*.

Guru Nanak: *Nirankari* is the name of God. *Nirankari* means one who belongs to Him. Being one of God's men and associated with Him, as such, I am, therefore, being called so.

Ali Yar: Who is your guide and teacher?

Guru Nanak: God, our Creator.

Ali Yar: How have you attained God?

Guru Nanak: By subduing my ego and by dwelling on nothing but God.²⁰

IV

But Guru Nanak did not stop just here. He not only asserted the oneness of God and his own relation with Him on the man-and-master level, but also abhorred vehemently the very idea of His supposed incarnation and opposed all those who ever claimed any Divinity or Godhead; or who had ever been made out as possessing it by their over-zealous followers. He demolished the very doctrine of divine incarnation, both by word and deed; and, thus, "surpassed every other reformer. No Hindu leader had shown the courage to question the correctness of this doctrine. Rama and Krishna had received the homage of everyone as divine beings. It was Nanak who boldly questioned their divinity and brought them down to the level of mortals and declared that the Almighty who created and controlled the whole universe could not add anything to His greatness

by assuming human shape to destroy such tyrants as Ravana and Kansa."²¹ There lies the distinctive superiority of Guru Nanak who, on the one hand, never gave utterance to the sacrilegious idea that he was himself God and asserted, on the other hand, with all vehemence that:

The most peculiar quality of God is
That there is none other like Him;
There never was, nor will ever be another (*Asa*, 349).

How could the person and intention of such a man of God be misunderstood? How could he be described as bearing a dual conception, as Archer has thought him to be, stating that "there have been two Nanaks, the factual and the 'formless'... He was a historical person; he is also a theological construction. He is what India and the world in general think he is; he is also what Sikhs think of him—he is a historico-theological person to them, a real person and also a creature of religious fancy."²² As far as we know and believe, there is nothing 'dual' about Guru Nanak, the man and his mission. His true disciples have never considered him so; have never regarded him either God or God-incarnate, either formless or a creature of religious fancy. For them Nanak has always been the *Satguru*, the true preceptor, the supreme guide, the great enlightener, the divine master who came to lead men from darkness to light, from evil to righteousness, from mortality to immortality. He came as a man, he lived as a man and he died as a man, though the like of him is yet to be known to the history of mankind.

He came into being like all men, about whom he later said:

We, conceived of flesh and born of flesh,
are the vessels of flesh (*Malar*; 1290).

V

Born in a respectable family in a village near Lahore, 500 years ago,²³ he was the only son of his parents. His father, Mehta Kalu, was a well-to-do *Kshatriya* and an influential official who had enough of land and cattle of his own. His mother, Tripta, was a woman of remarkable personality—religious-minded and simple-hearted. She greatly influenced the early years of his life.

He played in his childhood with his elder sister, Nanaki, who was much attached to him, her only brother. She understood him most and best, and was also the first to recognize his innate greatness, and devotion for God.

The chroniclers claim that he was handsome, healthy and ever-cheerful. He impressed everyone as a lovely, precocious, intelligent and wide-awake child. Puran Singh tells us: "He was a child of smiles... Whoever saw him or touched him accidentally, praised God... He was so

beautiful, so mysteriously fair in colour and form, with a radiance that was new on the earth. He cast a spell that none could escape. Rai Bular, the Muslim Governor of the place of his birth, loved him both as a child and as a boy; the Brahmin teacher loved him. Whoever came into contact with him was irresistibly drawn to him."²⁴ All that convinced his highly affectionate sister that her brother was born to fulfil a definite purpose, to play a historic role.

When he grew into a boy, he displayed immense love and sympathy for his playmates. He bore a serene countenance, reflecting wisdom and fellow-feeling. He used to talk little and was very humble and sweet in his speech. He slept little and ate only what was a bare necessity. At times, he appeared to draw himself in contemplative moods and indicated a deep religious bent of mind and signs of an unusual character.

He went to school at an early age and astonished his teachers and class-fellows with his conduct, devotion and inborn knowledge. After finishing his studies with the Pandit and the Maulavi of the place, he took to private study, and spent much of his time in meditation and in the company of learned and religious men.

His father held a good position in society and enjoyed full confidence of the head of the estate. Nanak being his only son, he had naturally pinned all hopes on him and wanted him to become a successful man. So, as he grew in age and reached his majority, he was made to try one trade after another, viz. farming, business, service, etc. But, as he was occupied mostly in meditating on God, associating with the holy, pursuing the truth and serving humanity, his mind could not be engrossed in worldly affairs, of course, much against the wishes of his parents and relatives. In order, therefore, to tie him down to the earth, they married him to the pious and dutiful Sulakhni, daughter of a Mul Chand of Batala. He led a happy married life and was blessed with two sons—Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das. But they, too, could not entangle Nanak. They could neither stand in the way of his mission of life nor could hold him back from his passion for serving the suffering humanity. While quite a boy, says Gokul Chand, "his indignation had been aroused by the hypocrisy and cant that stalked throughout the land. He at once made up his mind to devote his life to the service of his nation, and by precept and by example bring his people back to a religion of simplicity and sincerity, to wean them from the worship of stock and stone, restore them to the pure worship of their ancient forefathers and make them once more able to stand their ground as a nation."²⁵ The time for implementing that decision, with all his zeal and drive, came when he was a full-blooded youth. He was living then with his deeply devoted sister at Sultanpur on the bank of the Bein river and was working efficiently and honestly as the storekeeper of the Lodhi Governor of the area.

It was here that he took stock of the entire situation then prevailing inside and outside India. It was here again that he was

summoned to God's audience and was called to take up the mission of his life. It was here, too, that he, to the utter amazement of all, came out suddenly with his trumpet-blast—There is neither a Hindu, nor a Musalman (but only man)—and shook the entire surroundings with his revolutionary ideas and actions. "Here it was," to quote Vivekananda, "that the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened, and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus, but of Mohammedans, too."²⁶ From here, he started then on his historic tours, spread over a long period of about two decades and directed one after another towards east, south, north and west. He left from here on an unparalleled mission, leaving behind his young wife and little sons and disappearing soon into the wide world in order to respond to the divine call, to serve his fellow-men and to apprise them of the errors that had crept into their moral, social, religious and political life, and also to lead them from chaos to order, from evil to righteousness.

VI

Thus left this great man of God in the prime of his youth, marshalling all the qualities of his head and heart, body and soul for conveying God's Word to His people and for serving them without any distinction of caste, creed, colour and country. He travelled far and wide with a unique spiritual wanderlust "such as has seldom taken hold of any man known to history."²⁷ He visited centres of religious, social and cultural activities; sought the company of leaders, scholars and divines; met people of all castes and creeds, status and professions over nearly the whole of southern Asia. He travelled not only throughout the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent, but went as far as Tibet in the north, Ceylon in the south, Arabia and Afghanistan in the west, and Burma and China in the east. He is believed to have travelled, thus, for a greater period than any other prophet or founder of a religion. "And when we consider the difficulties of moving about, the hardships of times, and the diversity of political, social and religious regions, through which he had to pass during his travels, we cannot but marvel at the energy and patience with which he adapted himself to the ever-changing forces of his time."²⁸ We add to this, for our consideration, the aim and object of this uphill task undertaken by a solitary man so boldly and fearlessly and accomplished so efficiently and successfully, we are simply wonderstruck at the scope of his mission, vastness of his field and consistence of his character. As we can safely say, he did not go out to earn riches, name or fame for himself or his family, or to enjoy the pleasure of visiting new places and meeting different people. Accompanied mostly by the Muslim rebeck-player, Mardana, he generally walked his way through, or might have

used, at times, the available means of conveyance, for all his journeys. He undertook them purposely for the "reformation of the whole world, for the regeneration of all mankind;"²⁹ for conveying God's name to every nook and corner; for telling all men that "God is all in all and that purity of mind is the first of objects;"³⁰ for filling the minds of all the demoralized and downtrodden fellow-creatures with enthusiasm; and for calling upon them to live a virtuous and harmonious life, cherishing the love and fear of none but of God, their only creator and sustainer.

These incessant travels went a long way in bringing about the desired reformation and regeneration and in spreading his universal message far and wide. They also brought to the forefront the unique qualities of Nanak, the man and the missionary of God. During those exceptionally long years of travel, in India and abroad, "he had seen and heard so much, had occasion to think things over so deeply, had conversed with so many of the great men of the age and had himself grown so much in stature that, besides being the foremost man of his time, he had become one to whom later ages will always pay that tribute which the best of humanity deserve."³¹

VII

The man in Nanak did not sit at rest even on his return home after such extensive and arduous journeys. He settled on the right bank of the Ravi at Kartarpur and resumed living there as a full-fledged householder. According to Bhai Gurdas: When Guru Nanak returned to Kartarpur, he put off the pilgrim's dress and wore the simple garments of a family man. He sat on the *manji* (cot) and continued his spiritual instruction to all. This was the last phase of his life. It combined "a life of disciplined devotion with worldly activities, set in the context of normal family life and regular *satsang*."³² He took to farming to support his family and run the common kitchen. "His people came and worked with him in the fields. The Guru took keen delight in sowing wheat, and reaping the golden harvests: *He was of the people*. Once again, his stores were open to them. Bread and water were ready for all at all hours of the day, and crowds came and freely partook of the Guru's gifts. All who came became filled with the thoughts of love and the sick and the distressed were healed and comforted on hearing the Guru.

"He was an old man then; and he loved to see the crowds of God's disciples, coming from the distant Kabul and Central Asia and Assam and southern India—all the places where he had been in his younger days.

"In the trackless world of that time, the Baba, (old father) of his people, travelled on foot, singing God's praises and hymns of *Nam*, and gathering every trace of love. The Afghan and the Biloch, the Turk and the Tartar, the Sufi and the Brahman, the white and the dark races, mingled in

his great heart. The disciples, both men and women, came from all directions and took part freely in the songs of the Guru.

"So great was the reverence of his own country for him that Pir Baha-uddin, the great Sufi teacher who counted his followers in thousands, one morning suddenly turned his back towards Qaba (which no Moslem would do), and began bowing in his *namaz* (prayer) in the direction of Kartarpur. 'Why so?' cried his faithful followers, in alarm. 'This morning I see the light of God in this direction, my friends!' said he."³³

VIII

It was here at Kartarpur that Lehna, the flame-worshipper, came to him just by chance and was so impressed with the piety, glory and searching wisdom of the Master that he came never to go back. 'Beyond all expression was the love on each side between Lehna and Guru Nanak. The heights Baba Budha attained through his mighty struggle, Lehna attained through love. . . Nanak in this divine statue of love, chiselled his own image.' Feeling his own end drawing near, he renamed Lehna Angad (part of his ownself) and appointed him his successor, in preference to either of his sons. The bards, Satta and Balwand, the contemporaries of Guru Arjan, tell us that: When Angad was found true, he was installed on the throne and that the mode of life and the light of Angad were the same as those of his master. The master had merely changed the body.

The "light thus merged in the light," to quote Guru Arjan, and the man was "fulfilled." The 'fulfilment' came on September 22, 1539, when he, anticipating his soul's union with the Supreme Soul, the Union as if of the blessed bride with the Divine Spouse, asked his kin, devotees and disciples:

Sing, the praises of my Lord, my fearless God,
Whose song of praise brings everlasting solace. . .
The appointed hour of marriage (union with the Divine Spouse) has come.
Come my mates and cluster round me.
Anoint me, pour oil on the threshold
And bless me that I may meet my Lord.³⁴

Singing, thus, the Word of the Lord up to the last moment of his stay on the earth, the man in Nanak returned to his Master who had sent him in response to the call of the suffering humanity.

Strangely enough, a dispute arose among his followers about the disposal of his earthly remains. The Hindus as well as the Muslims claimed them as their own and insisted on cremating or burying him, according to their respective customs. And they both, imbued with immense affection and reverence for the departed Master, satisfied themselves by raising, in their own way, two shrines in his memory with a common wall between them. This was an event unique in the history of mankind.

The man who made such a history and left behind a unique tradition of holiness and disciplined worldliness, tolerance and benevolence, creative and practical activity, was himself an extraordinary man.

Swami Ananda Acharya has adored him as the "Prince among India's holy sons."³⁵ Yes, he was holy, holy to the core, but he was much more. He was ideal combination of many qualities and in him was 'concentrated all that was good and lofty in human nature.'

We do not possess any proper contemporary record to enable us to say authoritatively the exact details about his person and pattern of life. But we can definitely and confidently attempt an assessment of his personality, emerging from a study of his utterances recorded in the *Guru Granth* and preserved in their original undefiled form. The various Janamsakhis and chronicles also help us to a certain extent.

The aforesaid sources prove beyond doubt that his was a lovely, charming and towering personality. Maulavi Ghulam Ali, the Munshi of Farukh Siyyar, tells us that "he was very handsome."³⁶ Nature bestowed him with a strong and healthy physique which stood him in good stead in bearing the rigours of long and arduous journeys in the plains and deserts, on water and mountains. He was "not very tall but had long arms," attractive features and white rosy colour.

He kept on changing his dress according to the occasions and environments, customs and climates of the places he happened to visit from time to time. The *Janamsakhi*³⁷ states that when he started his journeys towards the east, his dress was a strange motley. He put on a mango-coloured jacket with a white sheet stretched over it and a necklace of bones around his neck. He bore a hat like that of a Muslim anchorite and imprinted his forehead like that of a Hindu devout. Thus he looked like neither a usual Hindu, nor a conventional Muslim in that unusual dress and unconventional form—partly Hindu, partly Muslim. It, incidentally, conformed to the form of his name too, the bearer of which could similarly not be associated with any particular religion, sect or caste as he was actually called 'Nanak Dev,' 'Nanak Shah' and 'Nanak Nath' by Hindus, Muslims and the Yogis, respectively, by adding their usual appellations to it.

But soon after his return home, he dressed himself like a Punjabi householder. Again, when he stepped out for his travels towards the West, he dressed himself like a Muslim pilgrim. Bhai Gurdas has described him as wearing, then, blue robes and carrying a staff, a prayer-mat, an earthen goblet in his hands and the holy book under his arm. On return from the Muslim world, he dressed himself in the simple garments of a family man.

This occasional and appropriate change of dress would afford him immense pleasure to feel not only at home but also one with the people he met and the places he visited. His outer appearance and subsequent behaviour simply confirmed that he belonged to them, to all of them.

This together with his physiognomy, bold demeanour and sincerity of purpose impressed all at home and abroad, won their confidence and inspired them with spontaneous reverence for him. They came forward to see him, to listen to him, to talk to him, and subsequently, to follow the way shown by him, not because of any dogma (which he never had) or any miracle (which he never exhibited) or any promise of intercession (which he never made), but because of the glow of his message, the goodness of his heart and the glamour of his personality.

IX

The personality of such a man would, indeed, have been exceedingly impressive, rather highly captivating. And it did wonderfully well on all occasions, at all places inside and outside India. His touch, sight and word alone converted even notorious robbers into friends of humanity, man-eaters into citizens of the world, ascetics into devoted householders, and tyrants into servants of the society.

An inscription dated 912 A.H. (A.D. 1506), inscribed in Turkish and preserved till today in a shrine of Baghdad, is a living monument to the impact of his charming and inspiring personality even in that distant stronghold of Islam. The shrine stands at a place where he was ordered to be stoned to death because of the alleged 'blasphemies' committed by him in singing the limitlessness of God and offering his prayer in an unconventional way. But the fury and *fatwa* (verdict) of the *Pir*, the wrath and uproar of the people who considered his actions and utterances an affront to Islam and to the holy Prophet, turned soon into reverence and understanding on seeing their victim from close quarters and finding in him nothing but an embodiment of love and truth, humility and sweetness, compassion and contentment, forgiveness and forbearance. The event, its sequel and impact, as recorded by Swami Ananda Acharya on reading that historic inscription reveals in no less way the piety, loftiness and lasting influence of that great man of God in addressing whom, he wrote:

Upon this simple slab of granite didst thou sit, discoursing of fraternal love and holy light, O Guru Nanak, Prince among India's holy sons! What song from the source of the Seven Waters thou didst sing to charm the soul of Iran! What peace from Himalaya's lonely caves and forests thou didst carry to the vine-groves and rose-gardens of Baghdad! What light from Badrinath's snowy Peak thou didst bear to illumine the heart of Bahlol, thy saintly Persian disciple?

Eight fortnights Bahlol hearkened to thy words on life and the Path and Spring Eternal, while the moon waxed and waned in the pomergrate-grove beside the grassy desert of the dead. And after thou hast left him to return to thy beloved Bharat's land, the faqir, it is said, would speak to none nor listen to the voice of man or angel;

His fame spread far and wide and the Shah came to pay him homage

but the holy man would take no earthly treasure nor hear the praise of kings and courtiers.

Thus lived he — lonely, devoted, thoughtful — for sixty winters, sitting before the stone whereon thy sacred feet had rested;

And ere he left this House of Ignorance, he wrote these words on the stone:

Here spake the Hindu Guru Nanak to Fakir Bahlol, and for these sixty winters since the Guru left Iran, the soul of Bahlol has rested on the Master's Word — like a bee poised on a dawnlit honey-rose.³⁸

That all-absorbing devotion shown by Bahlol till the last breath of his life does not seem to have any parallel in the religious history of the world. It was an extraordinary devotion of a 'man' for a 'man' coming from a foreign land, belonging to a different race, preaching an unusual religion, but a man, Oh! what a man! the like of whom is yet to be known to the history of mankind; a man whose "life," according to Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, "opened an era in the history of India and Asia—in the history of humanity. . . At rare intervals in history doth appear a man like Nanak."

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XLI

GURU NANAK'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

BHAG SINGH

In the comparatively tolerant modern times, it is not unusual to propagate religious harmony or to discount meaningless ritual. But to have done so almost 500 years ago in a country such as India could have been the work of only a brave and truly inspired man. Such a man was Guru Nanak, a supreme iconoclast and spiritual revolutionary. In 1469, when the air covering the entire country was heavy with the fog of religious bigotry, fanaticism, and superstition, Guru Nanak's advent was like the rising of a new sun driving its piercing rays through the clouds of fog and later clearing them away.

Not only was the country subjected to the tyranny of the Brahmin priestcraft, but also to the fanaticism of Islamic expansionism. Guru Nanak fought against both. He himself being a Hindu by birth, it was left to him to save the Hindus from the aggressive efforts of the Muslim rulers at proselytization. Those were the days of caste tyranny at its worst and of a rigid Brahmin imperialism. Moreover, the Hindu masses groaned under a heavy burden of meaningless rituals foisted by a corrupt clergy.

Equipping himself with the fundamentals of Hindu and Islamic theologies, the Guru began to remove the unnecessary accretions much as a skilful surgeon cuts dead tissue. He did not advance elaborate and involved arguments to prove the absurdity of Hindu rituals. He appealed to the basic intelligence of the common man.

Having worked as an official for some time in the service of the Pathan Government, he resigned his post when he heard God's call, despite the attempts of Nawab Daulat Khan, his employer, to dissuade him from taking that step. The Guru began his mission by declaring "There is no Hindu, no Musalman." Boldly he attended prayers at the local mosque, but ridiculed the insincerity of conventional practices.

The Guru journeyed far and into strange lands to propagate truth. Everywhere he imbibed all that was best and spurned cant and hypocrisy. Thus he laid the foundation of a new religion and welded those who accepted his way of thinking into a vigorous community. It is not astonishing, therefore, that his stern realism and sincerity are admired

today—430 years after his death—no less than they were admired during his lifetime.

Guru Nanak did not believe in an exclusive approach to God. On the other hand, he believed in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. His teachings include that truth is great, but true living is still greater. In politics, he opposed tyranny; in economics, he was against exploitation; he was a champion of the equality of men and women; he believed that humility was of paramount importance for spiritual growth; he had great courage, moral integrity and incisive wit. Above all, he was a man of superb common sense.

The Status of Guru Nanak

The most significant thing about Guru Nanak is the dispute about his status. We all know Guru Nanak as the founder of the Sikh religion. But even today there exists a school of thought that regards him as just a reformer. Without pausing to judge the merits of the proposition at this stage, let us investigate its origin, which can be traced to a religious catholicism which is very rare in the history of religions and of which Guru Nanak was a propounder and a powerful protagonist. For one thing, Guru Nanak did not question the efficacy of the existing religious systems, although he bitterly criticized the increasing emphasis in most religions on fetish and ritual at the expense of the spirit. For another, he did not claim that belief in his ministry was essential for the salvation of man. Unto the Hindu he said, "Be a good Hindu," and unto the Muslim he said, "Be a good Muslim." Catholicism of religious outlook is so important a constituent of Guru Nanak's teachings that only two generations after the termination of his ministry, the third Sikh Guru wrote the classical prayer:

Redeem the burning world from conflagration by Thy graciousness;
Through whichever dispensation it can be saved, save it.

Viewed as a Reformer

To us, in the twentieth century, such liberalism may appear to be nothing uncommon, but in the fifteenth century it was something very unusual, particularly in an organized religion. And its influence on Sikhism has been so strong that even in the days of the starkest militarism that followed Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, force was not used to win converts to Sikhism.

I have no doubt that Guru Nanak's modesty, his generous acknowledgement of the merits of other religions and his refusal to claim any superiority of his teaching to those of other religions have contributed substantially to the view that he was a reformer.

Having considered the origin of this view, we come next to the question of its validity. To judge this, I shall straightway pose a question: "What distinctive contribution did Guru Nanak make to the world's religions?"

Guru Nanak's greatest contribution to religion is the catholicism of religious outlook to which I have already referred, and his firm belief in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. "The Primal Being (*Allah*) created light; all men are the creation of His providence: all men have sprung from one Light. Who, then, is bad and who is good?"

For Guru Nanak, the world is not divided into two camps, the faithful and the heathen. All men are his friends and kinsmen and to regard them all as our equals, according to him, is the highest religion.

It is not denied that others before Guru Nanak had also preached the gospel of universal love. Hundreds of Indian saints and Persian mystics affirmed man's equality with man. But no one could make it one of the cornerstones of an organized religion, which, even when it grew into a strong military power, did not shed religious catholicism and which throughout its history has concluded its daily prayer with: "In Thy will, let the good of all prevail."

Practical Philosophy

No less significant is Guru Nanak's contribution to religious philosophy, which, as we shall presently see, is an extremely practical philosophy of life. Guru Nanak visualized some distinctive spiritual ends and means.

As far as religious ends are concerned, he rejected the Semitic paradise as well as the *swarga* of the popular Hindu conception. For him, spiritual consummation consisted in the merger of the individual soul into the all-embracing and immanent Divine Spirit. The way to this lay through the ecstasy of awe and wonder.

However, it is in the realm of spiritual means that Guru Nanak's most significant contribution has been made. He believed that spiritual means could not be oversimplified. The growth of spirituality was a slow, comprehensive and logically cumulative process. Praying to God and meditating on Him were important aids in this process, but actually important were the conscientious performance of one's duty, intellectual enlightenment, humility, temperance and charity. These qualities had to be cultivated. We just could not attain the spiritual goal by pilgrimage and by bathing in holy waters. Nor could faith in the ministry of a prophet divorced from virtuous and religious living secure to man the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Importance of a Successful Life

The religion for Guru Nanak was not detachable from life. It was not just one of our many activities, with time earmarked for it in our daily

routine. It guided and overlapped all our activities. This view of religion is clearly borne out by the fact that the importance of successful living has been so much emphasized by Guru Nanak. The Sikh ideal is "comfort in this world and ease in the hereafter." Guru Nanak himself proclaimed: "Truth is great; greater still is true living."

In saying this, Guru Nanak enunciated a principle of universal applicability; one that could guide human relationships in all spheres—social, economic and political. Its operation in all these spheres was demonstrated by Guru Nanak himself.

Opposed to Tyranny

In politics, Guru Nanak was opposed to any kind of tyranny. We all know that his times were the times of great political upheaval in India. The Lodhi Empire had collapsed and that of the Mughals was in the process of being built up. In those times of political instability, it was the common, poor, powerless and innocent people that suffered the most, not only because they were trodden down by uncontrolled and unscrupulous military hordes, but also because they held religious views that were an anathema to the rulers. As a result, they were subjected to harsh repression and tyranny. This made Guru Nanak's heart revolt and he resisted those forces. He saw that his people would have to be hardened for resistance through generations. He could not, however, suppress his protest. What a forthright protest it was that he addressed to God:

When a strong man killeth a strong man,
There is no place for protest.
But when a lion falls on a cow,
The cowherd should intervene.

And let us not forget that he regarded a submission to tyranny as reprehensible.

Guru Nanak discountenanced every form of exploitation. For him great merit attached to honest labour to earn one's bread. At Eminabad, during one of his itineraries, he put up with a low-caste carpenter, Lalo, and used to eat his bread made of *kodhra* (an inferior millet). Before the conclusion of his sojourn, Malik Bhago, the baron of the area, organized a feast for religious men. Guru Nanak did not attend the feast in spite of the fact that he had been invited to it. He was, therefore, brought by his men to Malik Bhago's mansion to explain his conduct. There, explaining his refusal to partake of Bhago's dainties, he said that whereas Lalo's modest bread contained the milk of honest labour, Bhago's dainties contained the blood of the exploited poor.

Social Attitude

Guru Nanak's attitude to social issues was strikingly modern. We have

already noted his advocacy of religious toleration. Not less striking is his spirited advocacy of women's rights, though women in his days were regarded as mere chattels:

We are born of women, we take shape from women
 We get engaged to women and we marry women.
 We have intimacy with women and through
 Women is our race perpetuated.
 When one's wife dies, one marries another woman;
 Through women are relationships formed.
 Why regard women inferior, although they have given birth to kings?

Our social life is happy, if it is built on the sound foundation of morality. Guru Nanak listed morality as the first step towards spiritual consummation. This should reflect the degree of his emphasis on true living.

Humility Paramount

It must also be clearly understood that Guru Nanak's system of ethics does not comprise merely negative, or even passive, virtues. Charity, benevolence, and humility are assigned prominent place in it. Guru Nanak would not only have his followers themselves meditate on God, but also to persuade others to do so. In the *Japji*, where the Guru has listed the stages of spiritual progress, the "Domain of Humility" immediately precedes the "Domain of Grace."

This close relationship between life and religion is reflected in Guru Nanak's own life. He was not a mystic recluse who had renounced the world and retired into a lonely monastery to meditate on God in selfish isolation. He was a householder who had married and raised a family, earned his living first by service as the keeper of the State's provision store, and then by agriculture.

Resignation

He was given to prolonged introspection, but was a wide-awake man, fully aware of the social, political and economic issues that were taking shape around him. He preached resignation, but resignation to the Will of God and not to a tyrant's repression. Resignation to the Will of God for him meant a calm acceptance of adversities and failures, but not necessarily without a cheerful struggle to overcome or avert them.

Here was a man in whom elements were evenly mixed and superbly developed; in him, the human nature attained its divine possibilities; in him, a creative sensibility was fused with a strong will to yield the superior poetry of practical but benevolent living. Here was a man in the fibre of whose personality logic and intuition were woven together and his poetry was flavoured with humour.

Incisive Logic

And now think of Guru Nanak, the ironist. When on a visit to Hardwar, he saw people splashing water in the direction of the sun, he also began to do the same, but in the opposite direction. They asked him what he was doing. He asked them what they were doing. They told him that they were sending water to their ancestors living in the region of the sun. He replied that he was watering his drought-stricken fields at Kartarpur in the Punjab. "But can you convey water to Kartarpur, which is at a distance of about 300 miles from here," they jeered at him. "If you can convey water to the sun, which is millions of miles away, I can likewise send water to my fields, which are only 300 miles distant," he retorted.

Think of the hazards of Guru Nanak's mission. A man of divine inspiration and robust common sense sets out to correct what was wrong in the world's religions. This was by no means a popular undertaking. He was to expose the dearly cherished beliefs. He was to expose the falsity of popular superstitions and to condemn the ritual which is quite often more popular than the religion itself.

There is no doubt that he was adequately equipped for this mission. He had unusual courage and moral integrity. He had ingenuity and the faculty of incisive wit. He had a debator's precision of speech and he could, if need be, manage to be very dramatic. He also had great presence of mind. In the fifteenth century, and even today, the question put in a Muslim country as to who was a superior being, the Hindu or the Muslim, could have discomfited the most resourceful person. For, if he conceded to the Hindu a superior place, he would be incurring the wrath of the powerful Muslims, and if he conceded superiority to the Muslim, he would be inviting forcible conversion on himself. Guru Nanak calmly answered: "Without acts of virtue both come to grief."

Spiritual Means

Spiritual means, visualized by Guru Nanak, differed radically from those visualized by his predecessors. For him, spiritual growth was a logical progression which the individual himself could accelerate or retard. The success of the process depended on the simultaneous development of all our faculties, which would be attained through dedication. Who can express this better than Guru Nanak himself?

Let chastity of thought, speech, and action provide the furnace;
 Let perseverance be the modelling skill and talent;
 Understanding be the anvil; the wisdom of past sages, the hammer;
 The fear of God, the bellows: devotion and austerity the fire;
 Love be the vessel in which the substance of the spirit to melt;
 In such a mint of the true word model thyself.

XLII

JAPJI AND UNIVERSAL MYSTICISM

K. SESHADRI

Mysticism implies withdrawal into one's own being. It signifies attunement with and absorption into one's own self. It is a movement towards a 'centre.' The 'centre' is described as transcendental, as it lies beyond the reach of the senses and common understanding, but, paradoxically, it is experienced by one in the depths of one's own heart. It is at once the 'centre' of the cosmos in its entirety and of the inmost soul and self of the individual. The mystic has awakened to the essential identity of the two. Hence he strives, in all appropriateness, to 'sense' the centre of Being and Reality by a plunge into the fathomless depths of his own consciousness.

The mystics belong to no particular time or country, though apparently they might have had a locus here or there, claiming for their birth or their life on earth a certain historicity relevant to the time and circumstances. Their deeds, no less than their utterances, reveal the unity of the spirit behind the bewildering variety of material phenomena. They speak in diverse tongues, "diverse show of words, but they are all one in meaning and verity." Their accents may differ, but their message is identical in essence. They have had a direct vision of Truth, an immediate, intimate spiritual perception, which is known as mystical experience. Indeed, it is the mystics who would testify to the basic unity of human thought and aspiration.

The *Japji* is an authentic revelation of Reality by Guru Nanak in the deepest moments of his God-consciousness, and reveals an inherent, mystical excellence, linking together the inner world of thought and feeling and the other world of action. It demonstrates how the wisdom of the mystic not only reveals the Truth, but inspires activity. The world of human affairs provides a field for enlightened action inspired and guided by an enduring, self-authenticated awareness of Truth. The mysticism of the *Japji* is not one of passive contemplation. It seeks to fulfil itself in action, urging man to an active participation in the affairs of dynamic world, whose dominant need is the integration of superior wisdom with selfless activity. This, we know, is the central theme of the teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. But the *Japji*, too, is no less a gospel

of action than a manual of meditation. It does envisage the return of the contemplative to the arena of action, after having replenished his resources at their fountainhead. Such a return would directly lead to dedicated action, possessing the power to transfigure society, as it would have transfigured his own personality in the sacred recesses of his inwardness. Emerging from the depths of his experience, he does not find the world around him annihilated. Indeed, he finds it radiant with a new meaning, ready to be remade in the light of his vision. What the mystic achieves is not merely his transition from one level to another, but his total transformation within and without. The transformation, of course, starts with and is centred in the individual, but it is by no means confined to him. The vision of the mystic, as the *Japji* shows, is an ever-widening vision, comprehending the whole of the cosmos and revealing the place of man in the pattern of universal harmony, effecting a radical change in the life and outlook of the individual and endowing him with infinite capacity to influence others as well. The mystic brings to bear the fruits of eternity on the processes of time. "The created soul of man has also two eyes," says the *Theologica Germanica*, "the one is the power of seeing into eternity, the other of seeing into time." The mystic, according to the *Japji*, uses both.

The *Japji* presents a gist of the Guru's teachings in thirty-eight principal stanzas, with an opening invocatory of two lines, which with the emphatic declaration,

Ad(i) Sac(u), Jugad(i) Sac(u)
Hai bhi Sac(u), Nanak hosi bhi Sac(u),

affirms the eternal nature of the One Real. A general invocatory stanza, used in several texts of the *Guru Granth*, is also included in the *Japji*, as its very head and front. These are the well-known lines beginning with the sacred sound *Aum*—"Ik Oamkar"—and constitute a highly compendious presentation of the Guru's concept of God as the One Supreme Spirit, Universal Being, Creator, Governor and Enjoyer, absolutely spontaneous, beyond all restraint or antagonism, timeless, though embodied, unborn, deathless, self-subsisting, and finally "the fruit of the Master's grace." Thus, even at the outset, one hears intimate echoes of the Upanishadic Brahman following the familiar, all-comprehensive meditation on the mystic *Aum*. But the Brahman of the *Japji* is *saguna* and *saprapanca*, closer to the concept of *Isvara*, the Soul of souls, the cause and ground of all creation, the *Antaryamin*, who rules from within, who is the real *Karta* and *Bhokta* of the existence, than to the concept of the pure consciousness of the Pure Being. This invocation is regarded as the *mul-mantra*, presenting God as infinite and timeless, yet manifest in innumerable finite forms within space and time, the ground of all change—Himself changeless—from whom 'burgeons forth' the entire world of creation, which declares His glory. It reflects the

meaning conveyed by the *sutra*, *Janmadyasya Yatah*, and sounds like a commentary on the *sruti* *Karanam-tu-dhyeyah*, which points out that the Jagatkarata, who is immanent in all things, is to be made the supreme object of one's devotion and *dhyana*. It also reveals a remarkable identity of approach with many a line in *Nammalvars Tiruvoymoli*, in which the Lord of Creation is spoken of as the object of all love and worship, and that such worship would open the inward eye of an aspirant to the hidden source of Being, from whom has burst forth the entire sense-presented world composed of the five elements.

Mannum neerum yeriyum, naluayuvum
I'nnunoy-viriyum embiranaye.

The emphasis on loving devotion and genuine spirit of worship is reiterated at several points in the *Prabhandhas* of the Alvars, and the parallels are difficult to miss even in a cursory reading of a translation of the *Japji* or the *Asa-ki-Var*. The parallel is particularly striking, wherever we have a reference to grace or to the miracle of transformation wrought by it. Side by side with the overriding necessity for grace, there is also abundant reference to the significance of human effort in the form of dedicated action and by way of unremitting worship and service. In all these, the Alvar addresses himself; the exhortation is to one's own mind and heart, as it is at several points in the *Guru Granth* to Nanak himself.

Guru Nanak's God is the God of attributes, of distinctive excellences, *kalyana-gunas*. "Some glorify His qualities, the charm of His beautiful attributes," says the third line of the third stanza of the *Japji*. "Let us sing the glory of this treasure-house of excellences" (*guni nidhanu*), says the fourth line of the fifth stanza. The next line significantly adds "hearing" and "reflecting" on the excellences of the Lord to the "singing" of His glory. *Gaviyai suniai man rakhiai bhao*. Andal, the bridal mystic of South India, who has immortalized her love of God in the thirty stanzas of her song-effusion known as the *Tiruppavai*, gives expression to the same thought, and in the same sequence, in the line *Vayinal padi, manattinal cinthikka*; and it is noteworthy that even in her next line—*poya pizhaiyum, pugatharuvan-ninra navum theeyinil thoosagum*—one could recognize the *Japji* note of the sixth line of the stanza, without which the previous line would be incomplete, and which says, "Shed the misery of the world and move into that abode of happiness (by dwelling on the glory of God)." Glorifying God through song and narrative, reflecting and meditating on His excellences and, thus, developing an attitude of mind, by which one would constantly be living in the Divine presence, are the way to liberation. That is the mystic way of devotion, of God-experience, of *sunan*, *manan* and *man ka bhao* which correspond generally to *sravana*, *manana* and *dhyana* of the Upanishad. The first two are preparatory and pave the way to *attunement* with Him, whereas

the third secures *absorption* into Him. These are elaborated to some extent in the subsequent stanzas.

The central theme of the *Japji* is thus the elevation of man to the heights of a mystic vision, the vision of God. The consummation of a truly religious life lies in the attainment of oneness with the Godhead. Attunement is a state of anticipation. It implies a readiness to receive, and respond to, the impact of grace. Vision is a state of illumination. It implies a profound awakening, revealing the indissoluble bond of intimate union between the individual soul and the Supreme Spirit. The great mystics of the world through the ages, whether of the East or of the West, have been the illuminated souls united with God and delighting in that union. At every stage, there is need for effort and discipline. But the overruling factor throughout is the grace of God, which comes not through mere learning, or through mere efficiency in the exercise of the intellect or any other instrument of empirical knowledge. Such knowledge may, however, be helpful up to a point, for the sense-presented world is not dismissed as unreal or illusory in the philosophy of the *Japji*. Metaphysical realism and moral idealism are as much the features of the *Japji* as mysticism or monotheism is.

The world of creation is itself a revelation of God, who has His seat in every one of the worlds brought into being by Him, declares one of the stanzas. The Creator contemplates His creation as an object of His sport, says Guru Nanak, coming close to the *Brahma Sutra*, *loka-vat-tu-lila kaivalyam*, but that is not to deny its reality or its value, for in the very next line we have the affirmation that it is real, inasmuch as it is His creation.

"This cosmic creation Infinite,
These scintillating starry hosts,
To Thy self-luminous radiance
And bounteous unity testify"—sings the poet Ghalib; and adds
"Hadst thou not willed to see Thyself
In Thy creation's magic mirror
We'd not be here to wonder at it."

These are echoes of the *Japji*. Here is mysticism at its highest.

We hear more of them, when we listen to the melody of Sufism. The teachings of the Sufis, like Rabia or Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, show that a knowledge of God is an immediate experience, transcending mere intellectual apprehension. Rabia describes it as "the beatific vision of God." Rumi sings of the attributes of God as distinctive and incomprehensible by human thought; and his perception of the soul as eternal and uncreated is closely akin to Guru Nanak's view and to the Hindu conception in general. Dhul-Nun-Al Misri visualizes the goal as complete union with Godhead (*tauhid*), and draws a distinction between intellectual knowledge, which is described as traditional (*ilm*), and mystical knowledge, which is God-experience (*ma'rifat*). Mystical knowledge is a state

of contemplation or realization by the heart and not comprehension by the intellect. This is a gift from God Himself, and an expression of His grace. "To those who behold God *with their hearts* He reveals unto them what He reveals not to others in the world," says Dhul-Nun, in tune with the Upanishad, which declares *yamevaisha-vrnute tena labhyah*. Ibun-al-Arabi links his conception of God as "Essence endowed with attributes," and as "Unity of Being," with that of the Perfect Man. Abu Yazid or Bayazid Al Bistami emphasizes inner purity rather than a formal adherence to ritual as leading to the love of God and union with Him. Nasafi stresses the need for the cultivation of virtues as excellences of character in the spiritual development of man. In Kalabadhi's ethics, there is just room for obligatory rites, like prayer and fasting. Al-Hallaj's prayer is a reiteration of "Thy Will will be done, Oh ! my Lord and Master" in a genuine spirit of surrender to the Supreme. Hujwiri points out the paramount necessity of a preceptor to initiate an aspirant into inward quest. According to Jili, God's attributes are forms in which He manifests Himself and through which He may be known. The attributes of God are not really different from His essence, says Jili and proceeds to show that the names of God are identical with God Himself, being His outward aspects. The highest name of God is Allah, he affirms, for it comprises all the Divine attributes, and God has made it a mirror for the reflection of His own glory. All these are ideas germane to the *Japji* and essential for any spiritual view or way of life. Wherever we go—to Buddhism or Christianity, to Islam or Hinduism—if we go deep enough, we touch the common ground, and that is the ground of mysticism.

The *Japji* reveals a process, both of seeking and of attainment. The quest is inward, and the goal is God-experience. The sacred shrine is within the heart of man, but the imperative precondition for the pilgrimage to bear fruit is egolessness. Hence the need for *dharma* and the discipline of morality.

"The message of the *Japji* is valid for all those who have an urge to break open their ego-shells, and merge themselves in that consciousness, which is a shoreless ocean," says Sohan Singh in *The Seeker's Path*, which is an interpretation of the *Japji*. This, indeed, is the very essence of mysticism. What hinders mystical vision and militates against mystical union is the vainglorious little ego of man. When the ego is shed, man is liberated, for then he rises to a region beyond the limitations of time and circumstance. The persistence of the ego is a symptom of man's pitiful subjection to the processes of time, while an inheritance awaits him in the Eternal Kingdom. Man naturally seeks to free himself by merging into the Eternal through attunement with and absorption into that which transcends time. He is a child of Eternity and not a slave of Time. Hence the innate urge of his soul for oneness with God, the Akal.

XLIII

GURU NANAK'S IMPACT ON HISTORY

GANDA SINGH

Over ten million Sikhs, playing a conspicuous role in the social and political life, not only of India, their homeland, but also in that of all the countries, Eastern and Western, wherever they have domiciled themselves as permanent immigrants or as temporary residents, are a living practical example of the impact of the life and teachings of Guru Nanak on history. Like the Guru himself, they are a practical people, always up and doing, bubbling with energy, and ready to be yoked together to solve the problems of life. They are never afraid of putting their hands to any type of work that comes their way and would strain every nerve to make it a success. And it is by sheer dint of hard work that they have won a place for themselves in their occupations and professions. The world knows them among its bravest soldiers, both of peace and war. With his hand on the handle of the plough or on the steering-wheel of the tractor, the Sikh is the hardiest peasant who becomes one with the land for raising his crops. But he is at his best in the field of battle when he is called upon to fight in defence of his motherland or for the protection of the weak and helpless, at home or abroad. Guru Nanak's belief in the Unity of God and selfless service of mankind has given to the Sikhs their character of unswerving faith in God and the Guru and in patriotism and sacrifice with which they not only freed the Punjab from under the yoke of the oppressors and usurpers in the eighteenth century but also carved for it, under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in the first half of the nineteenth century, a place of strength and honour on the international map and made a gift of it to India to stand as a sentinel on its north-western frontier to defend it against all future invasions from that quarter.

The teachings of Guru Nanak related mostly to the spiritual uplift of mankind and social goodwill and understanding among people of different creeds and classes, based on the common fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. According to him, there is but One God who is all-truth and the immortal, unborn and self-existing Creator, fearless and without hate. He is neither the *Allah* of the Muhammadans nor the Rama or the Krishna of the Hindus, but God of the universe, of all mankind and

of all religions. For the promotion and advancement of human goodwill and happy relations, Guru Nanak refused to recognize the man-made distinctions of castes and classes, of high and low and of the rich and the poor. And he condemned, with all force at his command, the aggression of one man upon another, that of the rulers upon their subjects, both in the field of politics and in that of religion. He stood for the freedom of conscience and expression. He was the strongest advocate of the cause of women. He would attach no impurity to them because of their sex, nor would he hold them in compulsory subjection to men. He gave them the fullest responsibility in all matters, spiritual and social, and regarded them in every way equal to men in the sight of God.

But Guru Nanak was not a visionary or a speculative theorist. He preached no complicated philosophy, couched in the unintelligible language of the other-worldly people. He was a practical man—one with the men of this world. He spoke to the people in the language of the people and explained his ideas to them with examples drawn from the everyday life of the common people. Guru Nanak's laboratories, both for the demonstration and practice of his teachings, were the institutions of *sangats* (congregations), and *pangats* (sitting of all people together in rows for community dining). Both at home and abroad, wherever he went, he established *sangats* of his followers and admirers. Therein, they met daily, generally in the evenings, to hear the Guru's teachings and sing his hymns, and to pray to God, and to discuss and solve their common problems. The forums of the *sangats* were known as *dharamsalas*. These later on developed into Sikh missionary centres where the Guru's work of reformation and transformation was continued by the subsequent Gurus and their leading representatives, popularly known as *masands*. It was in these *sangats* and *dharamsalas* that the Guru's Sikhs learnt practical lessons in Sikhism, freed themselves from the worship of gods and goddesses, and idols and images, and recited the hymns of the Master and his successors as the only way of the worship of the formless One Supreme God. It was here that the Sikhs, as the followers of the Guru were known, shook off their old prejudices and rubbed off their angularities. Here, they came closer to one another as brothers-in-faith and understood their real relationship as sons of the One common Creator. This popularized among them the use of the word *bhai* or brother, by which Guru Nanak addressed his companions and disciples like Bhai Mardana, of Muslim origin, and Bhai Bala, Bhai Budha and Bhai Lehna (his successor), coming from amongst the Hindus. The Sikhs ignored the monopoly of the Brahmins in matters religious and social, as they did not subscribe to the Brahmanical faith. Maubid Zulfikar Ardistani (Azur Sasani), the Parsi author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, who had seen Sikhism in practice at Kiratpur under the direct guidance of Guru Hargobind and Guru Har Rai in the forties of the seventeenth century, tells us:

There is no restriction among them that a Brahmin may not become the disciple of a Khatri, for Nanak was a Khatri, and no Guru among them was from the Brahmins as has been described. Similarly, they placed the Khatri under the authority of the Jats who belong to the *Vaishyas*, a lower caste, as the big *masands* of the Guru are mostly Jats. The Brahmins and the Khatri became pupils and disciples of the Guru through the medium of a *masand* and are accepted into the pupilage and discipline of the Guru (p. 233).

Not only this. Some of the popular saints whose hymns the fifth Guru incorporated in the Holy Book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth*, were not only Muslims by birth but also came from the lowest of the low Hindu and Muslim classes. For example, there are Sadhna, a Muslim butcher ; Kabir, a weaver ; Ravidas, a cobbler—an untouchable—and Sain, a low-caste barber, in addition to rebeck-players, who were *mirasis* or Muslim bards.

Thus, with the fatherhood of God preached by Guru Nanak, was the real brotherhood of man recognized and established in practice by the religion of the Sikhs. The tenth and last Guru, Gobind Singh, in his time went a step further. On the introduction of the baptismal ceremony for the order of the *Khalsa*, he made the initiates drink the baptismal water, the *amrit*, one after another, from one and the same vessel, in a double round—the first man becoming the last to drink it in the second round. This practice abolishes for the Sikhs the distinctions of high and low for all time to come and places them on a plain of absolute equality. And we have practical examples of this levelling in the subsequent history of the Sikhs. Within two years of the death of Guru Gobind Singh, when the *Khalsa* under the leadership of Banda Singh freed the eastern Punjab from under the galling yoke of the Mughals and established there the rule of the sons of the soil, no distinction was made in the appointment of ruling officials, and in the distribution of other offices. William Irvine tells us in his *Later Mughals* :

In all the *paraganas* occupied by the Sikhs, the reversal of previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather-dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru, when in a short space of time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler, with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home (Vol. 1, pp. 98-99).

This was a thing unimaginable in traditional Hinduism and had a revolutionary effect upon the history of northern India. It created among the Sikhs a much stronger bond of unity and made a new people of them with a separate nationality which, within half a century of untold sacrifices at the altar of national freedom, developed into a group of republican States, growing ultimately into a full-fledged sovereign State of the Punjab.

The ruler of that Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was a Sikh, no doubt, but the kingdom was not a theocratic Sikh State. It was a State of the people of the Punjab, whatever their religion. Its capital was at Lahore and not at Amritsar, the religious headquarters of the Sikhs, and its administration, both civil and military, was shared by the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs alike; nay, a number of European and American Christians were also appointed to high offices. The prime minister of the then Punjab was a Hindu. The minister for foreign affairs, which included political transactions with the neighbouring Muslim states, hostile at times, was a Muslim. The army was commanded by officers drawn from all classes, the artillery being manned predominantly by the Muslims.

On the religious side, there is no priestly class among the Sikhs. Anyone, man or woman, competent to recite and explain the hymns of the *Guru Granth* may conduct the religious services in the Sikh temples and lead the congregation in prayer. Men of all castes and creeds have free access to the *gurdwaras* or *dharmshalas*, as the Sikh temples are called, and they can, without any let or hindrance, join the congregations there and partake of the sacred *prasad* and of the meals served in the community kitchen or *Guru-ka-langar*.

In the matter of eating, the Sikhs have greatly contributed to the freedom of the people and have removed all old taboos. The *Dabistan* tells us the story of a Hindu boy who, for the freedom of eating the food of his choice, wished to become a Muslim. One Partap Mall Giani told him: "Why do you become a Muhammadan? If you have an inclination to eat everything, you may become a Sikh of the Guru and eat whatever you like" (p. 239).

The teachings of Guru Nanak were not individualistic in their outlook on and attitude towards life. They had a socialistic embrace with the result that not only the priest-oppressed Hindus, particularly of the third and fourth castes, the exploited Vaishya peasants and the suppressed Sudras, were drawn to his new faith, but a number of Muslims were as well attracted by the teachings and ways and manners of the successors and followers of Guru Nanak. This became a cause of complaints to the Mughal Emperors, Akbar and Jahangir, by the closed-minded Brahmins and fanatical Muslim *mullas* against the fifth Guru, Arjun. The liberal-minded Akbar found no fault with the Guru and his compilation of the Sikh Scripture. On the other hand, he appreciated his efforts for the spiritual and social well-being of the people and favourably considered his suggestion for a reduction in the increased taxes that had become oppressive for the ryots (*Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 514-515; Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, p. 425).

Emperor Jahangir, however, for political expediency, succumbed to the pressure of the Muslim revivalists, evidently of the Naqshbandi Shaikhs, and ordered the arrest and execution of Guru Arjun. The Emperor himself records it in his memoirs, the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p. 35, saying:

There lived at Goindwal on the bank of the River Beas a Hindu named Arjun in the garb of a *pir* or *shaikh*, so much so that he had by his ways and manners captivated the hearts of many simple-minded Hindus, nay, even of foolish and stupid Muslims... who called him *Guru*. From all directions, fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. For three or four generations, they had this shop warm. For years the thought had been presenting itself to me that either I should put an end to this false traffic or he should be brought into the fold of Islam. When this news [of the Guru having shown special favour to Prince Khusrav] reached the ears of our Majesty, and I fully knew his heresies, I ordered him to be brought into my presence and, having made over his houses, dwelling-places and children to Murtaza Khan [Shaikh Farid Bukhari] and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures.

Very significant, indeed, in this context is a letter of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid-i-Alif-i-Sani to Shaikh Farid Bukhari, entitled Murtaza Khan, the Governor of Lahore, referred to above. The Mujaddid writes :

The execution at this time of the accursed *Kafir* of Goindwal... with whatever motive... is an act of highest grace for the followers of Islam (*Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*, Vol. I, Part III, letter No. 193).

The execution of Guru Arjun for his religious activities was an act of high-handed tyranny aimed at the suppression of the Sikh movement and was a repetition of the oppressive policy of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth-century Sultans of India, which the great Guru Nanak had fearlessly criticized and condemned in the strongest terms, saying :

The kings are butchers, and cruelty is their knife. The sense of duty and responsibility has taken wing and fled (*Majh Var I*, 16-1).

Again,

Kings are like leopards and the revenue-collectors [behave like] dogs; they go and awaken people at all odd times; their servants wound the people with their claws and lick their blood like curs (*Malhar Var I*, 22-2).

The Guru felt shocked and outraged at the sack of Saidpur (Eminabad) during the third invasion of Babar in 1521 and burst out, shedding tears of blood :

Babar rushed down from Kabul with the bridal procession of sin and by force demanded the hand of the bride (India)... People sing the psalm of murder and smear themselves with saffron of blood (*Tilang I*, 5-1).

Guru Nanak was greatly moved by the pitiable sufferings of the Indian women at the hands of the Mughal soldiers. "The women who wore

beautiful tresses. . . have their locks shorn with scissors and dust is thrown upon their heads. . . dishonoured and with ropes round their necks, they are carried away by the soldiers." (*Asa I, Asht. xi*).

"If a powerful person were to attack another powerful person," said the Guru, "there would be no ground for grievance, but if a ferocious lion were to fall upon a herd of cattle, the master (the protector) of the herd would have to answer for it" (*Asa I, 39-42*).

In equally strong language, Guru Nanak upbraided the so-called 'masters of the herd,' the Lodhi Sultans of India, for not standing up manfully for the defence of their subjects and allowing the precious gem of the country to be easily snatched away by the foreigner. To quote his own words : "The dogs (the Lodhi rulers) have thrown away the invaluable gem ; when they are dead and gone, no one will remember them with regard" (*Asa I, 39-2*).

These sayings and other admonitions of the great Guru had come down as a heritage to Guru Hargobind who succeeded Guru Arjun after the latter's execution under the orders of Emperor Jahangir. Guru Hargobind then felt that a stage had come in the development of the Sikh people when they should be able to demonstrate their will to resist the evil of tyranny. As human history knows it, the tyrants are generally power-mad autocrats. No philosophies and religious teachings, however sublime and heart-touching, appeal to their conscience hardened by repeated acts of oppression. They are dead to all sense of humanity and are a curse to society and country at large. Bowing down to them is cowardice, and is an encouragement to and prolongation of *zulm*—injustice and cruelty—over the weak and helpless. This is what Guru Nanak had protested against and condemned. Guru Hargobind, therefore, decided to sanctify the use of arms like the operation-knife of a surgeon who uses it, as a last resort, to separate and save the healthy part of the body from a spreading ulcer. To initiate the community into martial ways, he himself wore two swords at the Akal Takht at Amritsar as emblems of spiritual and temporal authority—*Piri* and *Miri*—the combination of *bhakti* and *shakti*, of *deg* and *tegh*, the kettle to feed the needy and hungry, and the sword to protect the weak and helpless. This was the first step towards the transformation of Sikhism into a militant church and its followers into saint-soldiers and soldier-saints. According to the *Dabistan*, "The Guru had seven hundred horses in his stables ; and three hundred cavaliers, and sixty artillerymen were always in his service." This was the first corps of Sikh volunteers raised by the Guru at Amritsar for service.

But Guru Hargobind was not a mere soldier. He was primarily a saint, a *Guru*, sixth in the line of spiritual inheritance from Guru Nanak who had permitted no aggressive designs against anyone. Guru Hargobind's martialization, therefore, was purely for self-defence and for the defence of the defenceless. When the great Maratha saint, *Samarth Ramdas*,

during his northern India rambles, met Guru Hargobind at Srinagar in Garhwal in about 1634 and questioned him on this change, he replied : "Internally a hermit, and externally a prince. Arms mean protection to the weak and destruction to the tyrant. Guru Nanak had not renounced the world, he had renounced *maya* (the sense of attachment and possession)." This explained the Guru's meaning of the change, hearing which Ramdas said, "*Yeh hamare man bhavti hai*—this appeals to my mind" (*Panjah Sakhian*, No. 39).

Although Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh had to fight as many as eighteen battles, either against local chiefs or against the Mughal government, they were all defensive. Never, in any one of them, was the initiative taken by the Gurus, nor, as a result of their victories, was an inch of the enemy's territories occupied or towns and treasures plundered or a single captive carried away. Nay, when approached, Guru Gobind Singh was always ready for negotiations of peace. Not only this. When Bahadur Shah, after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb who had been responsible for the execution of the Guru's father (Guru Tegh Bahadur), approached the Guru, he readily agreed to help him with a detachment of Sikhs in the battle of succession at Jajau, June 8, 1707, in support of his rightful claim to the throne. This was the real Guru Gobind Singh, true in word and deed to the teachings of Guru Nanak.

"He who is imbued with the fear of the Lord becometh fearless, for he becometh like the one he serveth," was said by Guru Nanak in *Rag Gauri, Asht. vii-4*. And in his definition of God he says in the *Mul-mantra* that the True Creator is fearless and without enmity. And truly these two qualities have become an essential part of the Sikh character, as has been demonstrated time and again. Once convinced of the righteousness of their cause, the Sikhs will, in all fearlessness, be prepared to make every sacrifice to uphold it and would smilingly walk into the jaws of death, so that the survivors in the community at large might enjoy the fruit of their sacrifice.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, when the Khalsa under the command of Banda Singh was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against the Mughal Empire for the liberation of the Punjab from under its yoke, they never reduced it to a communal strife against the Muslims whose co-religionists the Mughals were. The struggle of the Khalsa was against the tyranny of the ruling class and not against the religion of the Mughals, although under the reigning Emperor's orders of December 10, 1710, the Sikhs, on the other hand, were "killed at sight wherever found." In April 1711, within four months and a half of the issue of this royal edict, the Sikh commander, Banda Singh, had proclaimed : "I am not opposed to Muslims" as such. The Mughal newsletter of April 29, 1711, tells us that "for any Muslim who approaches him (Banda Singh), he fixes a daily allowance and wages and looks after him. He has permitted them to read *khutba* and *namaz*, with the results that five thousand Muslims

have gathered round him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call (*azan*) and recite their prayers in the army of the wretched (Sikhs)" (*Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* (Jaipur); *Ruqat-i-Amin-ud-Daula*, No. 3; *Dastur-ul-Insha*, 6a).

And when Banda Singh and his 794 Sikh companions were brought as captives to Delhi and were being executed at the rate of a hundred a day (March 5-13, 1716), they with the name of God on their lips—*Wahiguru, Wahiguru goyan*—fearlessly welcomed the executioner's sword and called him *mukta*, a deliverer. In the words of the British ambassadors, John Surman and Edward Stephenson, who were eye-witnesses to this ghastly massacre, "It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatized from this new-formed religion" to save his muddy vesture of decay (Letter No. XII, to the President and Governor of Fort William and Council in Bengal, dated Dilly, March 10, 1716).

Now about Banda Singh. On June 9, 1716, when the flesh of his body was being torn with red-hot pincers, the Mughal Prime Minister Muhammad Amin Khan questioned him on the fierceness of his struggle against the Empire. "I will tell you," said Banda Singh, "whenever men become so corrupt and wicked as to relinquish the path of equity and abandon themselves to all kinds of excesses, the Providence never fails to raise a scourge like me to chastise a race so depraved, but when the measure of punishment is full, then He raises men like you to bring him to punishment" (*Siyar-ul-Mutakherin*, 404; Raymond, i, 91; Briggs, 79-80). What a fearless composure of mind and calmness and stoic self-control brought about by Guru Nanak's teachings!

The institutions of *sangat* and *pangat* (mixed congregations) and *Guru ka Langar* (common community dining) established by Guru Nanak, as mentioned earlier, had not only the levelling and equalizing effect upon the Sikhs, but they had also strengthened their cohesion as a separate nationality and democratized their social, religious and political organizations. The organization of the Dal Khalsa and the republican nature of the Sikh Misals during the eighteenth century also had their birth in the *sangats*. Sir George Campbell, who had seen this system in actual practice in the cis-Sutlej areas in the eighteen-forties before the annexation of the Punjab, tells us:

The Sikh system is very much like that out of which the German system sprang. They formed *misals* or military confederacies. . . Each *misal* elected its own supreme chief and sub-chiefs, and every horseman had his rights and his share in the common conquests. The combined *misals* formed the 'Khalsa' or the Sikh Commonwealth (*Memoirs of My Indian Career*, p. 46).

Speaking of the republic of Mehraj, which he knew intimately, he says:

Mehraj remained an independent republic till, with the rest of the country, it came under British protection. . . It was really a very complete, fully equipped republic. . . It was diplomatically recognized as a State. . . There were no chiefs or hereditary rulers; the State was governed by its *panches* or representative elders. There was nothing of any feudal system, or any division into conquerors and conquered. . . Unhappily, as I think, this interesting republic was soon after wiped out, when all the smaller Sikh States were mediatised and reduced to the position of British subjects (*Ibid.*, pp. 42-43).

Even when Maharaja Ranjit Singh integrated and consolidated the territories of some of the *misals* into the kingdom of the Punjab, he said that the kingdom, in reality, belonged to the Guru and that he was only his *raptia*, a *chaukidar*. And, always remembering the words of Guru Nanak "*bhullan andar sabh ko, abhull Guru Kartar*—everyone is fallible, the Supreme Creator alone is infallible," Maharaja Ranjit Singh never behaved like an infallible autocrat. We have on record, reproduced in facsimile in *The Real Ranjit Singh* by Fakir Syed Waheed-ud-Din, two of the Maharaja's *farmans*—and there might be many more which have not come to light as yet—wherein he had authorized Syed Faqir Nur-ud-Din and Sardar Amir Singh of Lahore to withhold and bring to his notice for amendment any order of the Maharaja himself, of the princes royal, of the Prime Minister or of the chief *Sardars*, if, in the opinion of the Syed or the Sardar, it was inappropriate. To quote, in English translation, one of them addressed to the Syed (pp. 30-32):

Sincere well-wisher, Fakir Nur-ud-Din Ji, may you be happy! It is hereby decreed by His Highness with the utmost emphasis that no person in the city should practise high-handedness and oppression on the people. Indeed, if even His Highness himself should issue an inappropriate order against any resident of Lahore, it should be clearly brought to the notice of His Highness, so that it may be amended. Protector of Bravery, Malwa Singh, should always be advised to dispense justice in accordance with legitimate right and without the slightest oppression and, furthermore, he should be advised to pass orders in consultations with the *panches* and judges of the city and in accordance with the *Shastras* and the *Quran*, as pertinent to the faith of the parties, for such is our pleasure. And should any person fail to act in accordance with your advice or instructions, you should send him a formal letter, so that it may serve as a proof on the strength of which His Highness may punish him for disobedience. . .
Despatched from the Court of His Highness, 31st Bhadon, 1882 *Sambat* (September 13, A.D. 1825).

This was, perhaps, the only order of its kind in the history of the world issued by a king authorizing a subordinate officer of the State to withhold any order issued by the king himself which, in the opinion of that officer, appeared to him to be inappropriate and oppressive. The credit for this extreme humility in the interests of the people goes to the

follower of Guru Nanak who had enjoined upon the kings to take a vow of dedication to impartial justice (*Sarang Var I*, vii-2).

The Sikhs have also proved themselves to be no less formidable in nonviolent moral warfare. In 1922, in the Guru-ka-Bagh struggle, they took a solemn vow at the holy Akal Takht at Amritsar to offer *satyagraha* and in all circumstances to remain nonviolent in word and deed. On the refusal of their volunteers to disperse under the orders of the police interfering with their religious liberty, their parties of 100 each were mercilessly beaten up day by day and thrown into roadside ditches to be picked up by medical-relief parties. These nonviolent soldiers included among them many a veteran of the Frontier campaign and of the First Great War. But not one of them raised his little finger against the police or uttered a word of complaint. The reports of eye-witnesses sent to the press from the place of occurrence stirred the conscience of the world. In the words of the Rev. C. F. Andrews, "a new heroism, learnt through suffering, has risen in the land. A new lesson in moral warfare has been taught to the world" by the followers of Guru Nanak.

At Jaito on February 21, 1924, the Sikh *satyagrahis* literally ran into the jaws of death in the face of machinegun fire and, ultimately, came out successful in their twenty-two-week-long struggle against the Government.

In January 1922, after the success of the Sikhs in their nonviolent struggle in the Golden Temple Keys affairs, Mahatma Gandhi congratulated Baba Kharak Singh, the then President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, saying: "*First Decisive Battle For India's Freedom Won. Congratulations*" (*Confidential Papers of the Akali Movement*).

"As regards nonviolence, with its attendant conception of self-sacrifice," wrote Lala Lajpat Rai, "they have given the most amazing proofs at Nanakana Sahib... and later at Ajnala and Amritsar. They have proved themselves worthy descendants of their Gurus and the examples they have set of self-sacrifice and courage, devoid of swagger, in the face of provocation, will be hard to beat."

The above is a brief account of how the life of the people came to be transformed under the impact of the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. They had, in fact, stirred the inner soul of the people and had freed them from the thralldom of the priestly classes. Freed from the worship of idols and images, they came into their own, and introduced into the country a monotheistic, casteless and classless society of manly servants of the people—an order of fearless saint-soldiers, the Khalsa—who, in their turn, made innumerable sacrifices to free their land from its tyrannous rulers and foreign usurpers. And, they ultimately succeeded in creating on the north-west an independent sovereign state of the Punjab and made a gift of it to India to serve as the guardian of its honour and independence.

XLIV

GURU NANAK AND HIS MESSAGE—SAINTLY RELEVANCE AND CHALLENGE

AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

O Wonder of wonders!
Thou art the spirit that pervadeth all:
'Tis Thy Light, that lights all hearts.¹

Religion is rooted in man's need to remove *avidya* or ignorance and offers to him a way to end the confusion he continually finds about him. In the course of dispelling *avidya*, many problems arise, allowing much speculation and diverse opinions. Yet behind the speculations and the many attempts to bring forth a greater understanding of the course of life lies the single Reality from which diversity springs. It is in the diversity that confusion arises, just as immediately after the realization of the underlying Reality, all fog of confusion is lifted.

It was into such a situation of confusion over the multiplicity of things and deviational practices that Guru Nanak came forth in song to proclaim a single Reality, "I see the Light hid within me, spontaneously."² "When I look carefully, I see no other than God. The one God pervadeth all places; the one God dwelleth in the heart."³ With this firm realization of the light within the heart, with that of the light which illuminates the universe, Guru Nanak was able to bring reconciliation and peace in the midst of conflict. He ceaselessly worked to bring out in others the realization of a deeper truth upon which limited perspectives could be easily tested and understood for what they actually were.

Guru Nanak had a rigorous doctrine based on the sole aim of leading man from his ego-centred self into the court of the Lord. Through song, through devotion, through work and service Guru Nanak strove again and again to raise mankind to the realization of the transcendental Truth which was the very essence of his being. To do so he had to call upon mankind and oppose the folly of running "about intoxicated with pride, greed and cravings, engrossed in *maya*."⁴ Men had to be saved from the obsession of following limited gains and accumulations. He saw that the people about him had no firm ground upon which to

centre themselves, no sense of direction. "Without the Lord thou shalt trudge about wearily."⁵

Man cannot live in two spheres of being. Either he will be firmly grounded in the work of the Lord where selfish motives have no sway, or he shall follow the passions and desires of his limited being, missing the wider context of his life. "The ego is opposed to the Name. Both cannot reside in the same place."⁶ "He alone is true."⁷ "Man forsaketh God and indulgeth in sensual pleasures and, thus, inviteth suffering."⁸ That we cannot live in two places at one and the same time raises life's most difficult problem, for if one is ego-centred, one believes this to be the life's true home and gains an interpretation of things which somewhat satisfies the condition. Therefore in a sense the blindness is total, for all understanding is limited to fit the narrowly set boundaries. It is here that those persons who have gained the direct sense of God or Truth have their great significance. Living fully in the light of Reality, they are able to bring to bear the significance of the larger life and lead others beyond the limitations which have hindered them.

Although Guru Nanak found man in this weary condition, he had great hopes in man's ultimate capacity to win the higher life. Yet it was not solely man's effort that was needed. The realization of Truth was not one-sided from which through strenuous effort all that was desired would come out. Instead, with the knowledge of the nearness of God, one could win grace and salvation. "O thou ignorant bride, Thy Lord is near here."⁹ "We, the meek and the lowly, belong to Thee, O Lord, save us, O save us, Thou highest of the high."¹⁰

There is no gulf between man and God, only it appears to be so. "He is within and without His creation."¹¹ Yet because we have become so engrossed in ourselves that we see only that side of our being which is limited to the things of the senses as the human reality. By becoming totally engrossed in this single level of our being, the rest of the life is seen in the wrong proportions. We have lost the deeper light within the heart. "The gateway to Him opens only when the fire of self is extinguished."¹²

The distance becomes set between "me" as the lowly creature indulging in "myself" as against the limitless Lord of unfathomable virtues. This distinction between the two, with the link between them, makes it possible for us to work out the salvation where the lower self becomes merged in the Lord through the grace of His will. We are helped to turn away from those factors of limitation and move towards "The Domain of Truth" where "the Formless abides."¹³

To offer peace where confusion abounded, Guru Nanak asked that we meditate on the Name. "If man apply his mind he shall find the comforting Name."¹⁴ Here was the way to gain stability and to pierce into the Truth of things. The Name became the central theme for singing the praises of the Lord and winning entry into His Court. The

continual returning in devotion to the Lord through his Name sets the true direction and begins to lift one from the continual involvement into *maya* to the higher realm of spiritual consciousness:

With the Lord's Name is my mind pierced through; what else is now
for me to dwell upon?

In the consciousness of the Word is peace;

Imbued with the Lord, one is in utter happiness.

Keep me as Thou willest, Lord, for Thy Name is my only succour.

O my mind, submit thou to the Master's Will;

He who decked thy body and mind, on Him thou dwell.

Offer thou like incense thy every bit to the fire (of the Lord);

Make thou thy body the firewood and light it (with His love) night
and day.

Nothing can equal the Lord's Name,

Even if thou practisest myriads of good deeds;

Even if thou cuttest up thy body in a niche in the Himalayas,

Thy mind's disease is cured not.

Nothing, O nothing, can equal the God's Name: I have tested (and
found wanting) all other ways.

Abiding in the fortresses of gold, if thou dispersest fine horses and
elephants in charity,

And lands too, and many cows, the mind's ego leaves thee not.

If the Lord's Name pierces thy mind through, the Guru gives thee
the gift of Truth.

Thy intellect (may be sharpened) by the mind's hard discipline; and
the Vedas thou mayest read through;

(But) thy soul is trapped by shares of many kinds: through virtues
alone the Guru opens unto thee the door of salvation.

Truth is the highest of all virtues; but living in Truth is higher still.

Everyone is high, not one seems low to me;

For, He, the only Potter, hath made all vessels; from His light is the
light of the three worlds.

Through His grace one receives the Truth, and no one can erase the
Gift of Eternity.

When a saint meets a saint through the Guru's love, he findeth peace.

If one merges in the True Guru, the unutterable Truth is dwelt upon.

One drinketh nectar and is in peace; at the Lord's Court he gets the robe.

In all hearts rings the music of the (Lord's) flute; and one loveth
spontaneously the Word night and day.

Rare are they who know this; through the Guru are their minds
made wise.

Forget not the Name, O Nanak, for thou art delivered by practising
the Word.¹⁵

With this incentive to the spiritual life, a life which transcends the illusions and blindness of the limited self, Guru Nanak spoke of the necessity of moral preparation through devotion and service in the wider world. "Dedicate thyself to service in the world, so that thou gettest a seat in the Lord's Court. Sayeth Nanak, 'Thus wilt thou live in ever-Joy'".¹⁶

Here life in the world does not contradict life in the spirit. What is

asked for is a change in one's attitude. Just as one can work for oneself or for another, likewise one may work for the Lord of life. "Without Thee, O Lord, all is untrue."¹⁷ Guru Nanak never asks one to give up one's life's duties in the world by turning away from it. Again and again in his songs he speaks of only changing our attitude to the world and not to shun it:

One is defiled not by hearing music or by uttering the Vedas,
Nor by the changing of the seasons through the movement of the sun
or the moon,
Nor through good, nor through baths, nor if it raineth all over.
O one is defiled not by the earth or the waters;
Nor if the water mergeth in the winds.
Sayeth Nanak: It is by turning one's back on God that one is defiled;
For, he, who is without the Guru, is shorn of all merit.¹⁸

Guru Nanak asks that we cultivate our virtues always taking into consideration those around us. "Those who toil to earn their living and then share their earnings with others have found the true way."¹⁹ Yet one's work may not be done directly for others, but rather should grow from one's devotion to God, for God is the source of all virtues.

The unity of all life is to be found by reaching outward with greater responsibility, to take into consideration all people, "to be humble before everyone and call no one bad."²⁰ Guru Nanak equates one's life in the world with the lotus in the pond. The lotus grows through the mud and the water, "and yet keeps detached from both."²¹ It brings forth its flower of perfection above both.

Similarly for man, Guru Nanak has said, "The body is the temple of God, within which He hath locked infinite light."²² "In thy mansion liveth the infinite, unfathomable God."²³

Our sufferings are rooted in ungodliness, in turning away from the source of all that is. Turned towards the world of desire we can "Impute not blame on anyone, but rather to our own *karma*. I have suffered the consequences of my actions; I may blame no one else."²⁴ With this sense of responsibility for our actions, there naturally arises a sense of co-operation in the workings of the greater world. We may set the direction outwards where we seek to consider others. Seen as a growing world "One gets in the next world only what one earns through honest effort, sharing it with others."²⁵ If we seek to compete with others to take what we want for ourselves, the unity is cut apart and limitations close around us as we attempt to hold to things acquired against others.

In reaching outward to the greater world, the Lord of all must be the goal, or, limits of some sort shall remain. "Praise Him whose limit cannot be found."²⁶ "The one Lord who created the world is the Lord of all."²⁷ Devotion for God becomes the supreme path leading to the revelation of the unity of all life.

With the need to bring one's life into harmony with the Divine Will, the idea of only one way, one path, gains greater clarity. From the point of view of the many, the diversity of ways and paths has its meaning, but Guru Nanak chose to emphasize the need to overcome one's small self and rise up to the life of the Divine. From such an emphasis, the insistence on one way comes forth: that way whereby we overcome our limitations and gain salvation through greater and greater participation in the Court of the Lord. It is a turning inward, and that is a turning without. "When one seeth the Lord within and without oneself, the (inner) fire is quenched."²⁸ What we gain through our realization of the truth, we bring to the notice of the world. The peace we find within is a reflection of the peace without. We act in accordance with our inmost truth as well as with the outer world. There are no steadfast lines of demarcation between ourselves and the world at large. The interaction and involvement is such that it defies the descriptions of limiting boundaries:

One must hear, believe, love the Name,
And bathe in the sacred fount within one's frame.
For worship there cannot be till virtues shine.²⁹

The cultivation of virtues leads to the highest of all virtues—the devotion for the Lord. With the cultivation of virtues we control and remove actions initiated for selfish motives. Guru Nanak accepts the law of *karma*, whereby a continuity is found within one's life where all one's actions shape one's life and character. By insisting on achieving merit through virtuous actions he is seeking to create within each person the capacity to reach into his deeper nature. Service becomes meaningful and active when it and the divine source of love are linked together.

The greatest of the difficulties we must conquer is that of the mind and its interpretation of things. "O my mind, know thou, that thou must also leave."³⁰ The mind's interpretation of things is far different from one's actual involvement into the inner life. The mind works through abstractions, dividing the world into units and creating symbols to represent the pieces held in isolation. A sort of puzzle is brought into being where the different pieces are juggled about into different patterns. As we manipulate these pieces, building various structures we wander very far from the truth of things, for "this alone is His virtue that He alone is."³¹ This does not mean that the intellect and the whole meaning of reason vanish in the light of the real. What Guru Nanak and the great saints have said is that the divine sight alone gives us the true relationship, the balance of values which makes the material and the spiritual appear not as separate entities but as parts of the whole. But intellectual dogmas—as well as unreal ecstasies—take us further away from the unity of love. "Think not that thou shalt find the Lord by mere words."³²

The extreme difficulty in achieving illumination is realized when we know that the mind and its thoughts can lead one away from the source of things to fragmentary and unrelated ideas. Guru Nanak frees us from this perplexity by insisting on the lowliness of man. For when speaking of man as a human being he is emphasizing that aspect of man's nature which is engrossed in the world of the senses. It needs to be disciplined, lessened or extinguished, so that the other side of man's nature which is in direct communion with the ultimate truth comes into greater focus. "I beg at Thy door ever and for ever more. I practise the way that illumineth me with Thy vision and I beg at Thy door for nothing else. Bless me with Thy Grace."³³

In submission, one turns away from the old self that wanders aimlessly among the things of the world. The plea is to overcome the fleeting things with the sustaining light of truth. It is the coming into being of the new, of the Lord's light, and a diminishing of the ego-centred cravings. The one side of our being grows less as the other increases in brilliance. It is the sacrifice of the unreal and the blind for the real and the enlightened.

Guru Nanak asks that may our life become a sacrifice unto the Lord, that we seek more and more to come into harmony with the Divine. "Yet through the Love of the Lord's Name, through truth and poise does one get great glory and one makes the Lord's Name one's mainstay."³⁴ The more dedicated and devoted we become to the Lord, the less remains the distance between the two. But as revelation only comes after the distance which the self creates has been removed, the Lord is "known" through His Name. "Myriads are Thy names, O Lord, I know not their end. There is no other like Thee. There is no need to shout but to look within."³⁵ The Name becomes the dynamic point, leading one ever closer to the chosen object. Each opportunity taken to praise the Lord through the Name with song and devotion creates greater strength within us and brings us ever closer. "Those saturated with the Name rid themselves of the ego and ever abide in Truth."³⁶

With the weakening of the power of the ego, the sense of the meaning of the Will of the Lord begins to glow and the mystery of life, of the creation, becomes astoundingly wonderful. Then one comes to "know that God's doings are beyond the count of us beings."³⁷

The culmination of one's efforts results in grace, the revelation of the Lord within one's heart. It is won through the single-minded devotion which overcomes all the fluctuations arising from the passions and desires. "He who sees this contemplates, is filled with joyous zeal."³⁸ "Whoever dwelleth on His Name, heareth the voice of God within himself."³⁹

But there is more than this inner revelation, for the unity of Reality is seen to be everywhere. It is not abstract knowledge where we rationalize the unity from a few ascertained facts, but rather a spirit that permeates one's whole being, giving a new sense of our place and that of

others in the world. "They who are detached and saturated with the Name know the True One residing everywhere."⁴⁰

From this experience of beholding everywhere the Truth of the world as a revelation, our attitude greatly changes. As we seek to realize the summit, we must make a deliberate effort to do good. We must, through reason and belief, seek the right way. But this does not hold good for those who have mounted the summit. Hence Divine love so saturates one's being that one's natural attitude is one of peace, joy and love for all. The depth of being is here so great that reconciliation is found for all diverging opinions. Disputes are settled as if by magic. Deeper interactions are sought. Work in the world becomes a constant endeavour to remove the limitations and shackles holding so many others in bondage.

"He alone can discourse on Him who knoweth Him."⁴¹ Too often we find interpretations of reality based on abstract reasoning where the presentation of Truth is a conglomeration of many things. But such views must not lack the undivided unity which gives freedom and joy to the vast interplay of all that is. If we only experience intellectual understanding, we cannot rise above mental preconditions. The need is for direct experience or merger into the Divine, so that a deep witnessing can come forth. And here lies the unbiased witness seeking only to spread greater realization and understanding among others.

Here arises the place of the Guru or the Divine witness. Such a being stands in the two worlds, as it were. His ultimate footing lies in the Court of the Lord, but he roams among mankind to relieve their sufferings and create in them that attitude towards truth which lies hidden within. The Guru sees and knows that "God's wisdom pervadeth all beings, yet it remaineth unperceived. Wherever I see, I see Him."⁴²

Yet the bare existence of the Guru is not enough. All mankind partakes of the Divine and all need to work ceaselessly to bring out this deeper side of their being. Without effort nothing avails. "The whole world meets the guru. But merely meeting the guru does not bring salvation unless one meditates on the guru's word."⁴³ The truth saturates the guru and reveals its nature through him, he being a finer embodiment of the Divine.

Even if we cling to the guru himself, seeking salvation, complete realization is blocked from us. "The Truth alone saves us, yea, the Truth alone."⁴⁴ But this embodiment of Truth which the guru is saturated with helps to set the direction in those struggling to rise above selfish cravings. The Divine is "merged in the Guru and (is) revealed... through him."

It is this revelation which the Guru embodies that sets his teachings apart from teaching as it is normally understood. Generally, we learn in order to reach some goal. And the goal assumes prime importance. Spiritual leaders also lay stress on the goal to be obtained, but at the same time give great emphasis to the means used to reach that goal.

In a general sense, we may say that all people, in their own way, are seeking to achieve a better way of life, to rise above certain conditions in order to bring about a change. This is the meaning of man's work through effort to create a new and different situation with some sort of orientation which leads to a positive gain. From this we achieve history and civilization as the fruit of our effort.

If we see materialistic gains as our aim, the goal is easily discernible, for many achievements ever present themselves to the senses as the objects for our own satisfaction. Here civilization acquires an easily marked character or pattern as we observe the ever-increasing products building up. In setting such limits on man's work and effort, all too easily lose sight of man's relation to himself, to others, and to the world about him. We all tend to minimize those spheres of man's life which are different from our sense of measuring achievement. Human relations then become factors only in the sense of contributing to the well-being of our materialistic gains, or a similar measurable centre of reference.

What happens is that a meaningful place in life is lost sight of as we orientate ourselves more and more towards the goal we set before us. We become insensitive to the gross acts which we commit at the moment thinking almost exclusively of the world we are trying to bring about. It is into such a situation as this where mental hallucination distorts our actual life that the spiritual person offers a witness centred on man's ever-present life.

Nehru, in speaking of Gandhiji, has written: "I have been attracted by Gandhiji's stress on the right means... perhaps ends and means are not really separable and form together one organic whole. In a world which thinks almost exclusively of ends and ignores means, this emphasis on means seems odd and remarkable."⁴⁶ It is to live in the world truthfully as it is that marks the spiritual man from those who seek to live elsewhere in some distant future. The world is what it is and not what we wish it to be.

Guru Nanak found himself immersed in a world bent upon disunity and petty squabbling where too many people sought their own good by depriving others of it. In the blind desires of the times, might and dogmatism had become the means to achieve wealth and prestige. The use of brute force and religious dogma buried human sensitivity in a sea of justifiable arrogance.

Guru Nanak was born in north-western India in 1469. The then political conditions subjected it to attacks from Central Asia and Afghanistan. Many of the invaders came for plunder and left behind them death and destruction. As they left, small States grew up, and they quarrelled amongst themselves. It was during this period and the earlier period that Islam brought its influence to bear upon the social life of India.

Islam came as an aggressively militant doctrine. Under the Islamic State, "God is the only true ruler... and the earthly rulers are merely His

agents, whose sole duty is to enforce and spread the Quranic law, which is divine in the eyes of all Muslims."⁴⁷ The Hindus as a people developed overly adjustive mental habits in order to get on in the world. In short, they suffered a great deal of moral and intellectual degeneration.

The world, where once sublime ideas prevailed, suffered from gross limitations which infringed the lives of the people. Into such world was Guru Nanak born. His early years were spent in the spiritual quest where he had to overcome the temptations of living a life going on in narrow grooves. In his songs are found the ways he sought to overcome the narrow limitations surrounding others; he wanted them to see what was familiar in a fresh light. Each time his family or friends tried to hold him down through some ritual or occupation, Guru Nanak would bring out for them the deeper significance of spiritual truth, which they had missed.

One incident of this was the ceremony concerning the sacred thread. The upper-class boys were put through this ceremony of great religious and social sanction. But Nanak, as a child, made this comment:

Countless thefts, villainies, falsehoods and blasphemies are going on, countless deceptions are practised and countless secret sins are carried within the soul, day and night. And yet a thread is spun out of cotton and the Brahmin's duty ends with twisting it. A goat is killed, cooked and eaten and then all think the thread is worth putting on.⁴⁸

Guru Nanak found the contradiction too blatant to accept the situation for what it was. He had to comment on the foolish way the ceremony was considered in itself to offer the greater life. But on the positive side, using the symbols of the ceremony, he sought to bring out the deeper significance that the ceremony should convey:

From the cotton of mercy, make threads of contentment and then with the knots of continence, apply twists of righteousness. The thread prepared in this way will be of use to the soul. O Pandit, if thou canst really make such a thread, put it on me. It will neither break, nor get soiled, burnt or lost. Blessed, Nanak, is the person who goeth about with such a thread on his neck.⁴⁹

Learning in the school of the town was orientated towards making a student capable of earning wealth, influence and power. Again, instead of adopting the whole system of education, Guru Nanak came forth with the plea for changing the values and orientation which he found so undesirable; he opposed an education that kept one from truthful living:

Burn the earthly attachment, break it into a powder to make thy ink and make thy pure intelligence the paper to write upon. With the pen of love make thy mind a writer to write wisdom, as instructed by the Guru. Write thou His praises and His Name. Write thou that He is infinite and without end. O dear sir, learn to write such an account as should become a true certificate when checked up here before the people or hereafter at the Guru's Court.⁵⁰

It is wonderful that he asks that we seek to bring our life into harmony "before the people as well as before God's Court." Man partakes of two spheres, one side being rooted in this life shared with others, the other firmly grounded in the Divine. The world is the meeting-point of the empirical and the Divine. Our life needs that orientation which reaches into both. On the one hand we are immersed in the world where joys and sorrows continually arise and cease, where no solid foundation is found. It is the ever-present change under which we work up our personality. But fear arises if we live here with all our strength. Freedom comes from the Divine side of our nature, where permanence dwells. In such a light, personality takes on a new perspective as a growing and changing organism ever reacting with the world about us. It is with the sense of the real that the personality gains its proper stability. Otherwise, it flounders upon the changing, divisive world of what is material and clings to the transient as real, mistaking the true nature of all that is.

In Guru Nanak's early life, there are many incidents referring to his seeking to raise all aspects of the village life to a higher level of service and devotion. He never retreated from the situations which he encountered, but rather entered all with his usual calmness and dignity. As a herdsman, as a farmer, and as a storekeeper he shows the same attitude. "Those who toil to earn their living and then share their earning with others, have found the true way."⁵¹

It is with such a background that Guru Nanak came to the fullness of spiritual realization. He neither held the tendency to shun the world nor became too engrossed in it. He developed a deeper and deeper commitment as he beheld the suffering and horror all around him. Commenting on his times he said, "Thus Kali age is the knife, and the kings are butchers. And righteousness hath taken wing."⁵² To rekindle righteousness where the lamp had become dim became his task, and for twenty years he travelled across the then known world of India and the Near East seeking to know the life of communities separated by religious and economic barriers.

Guru Nanak knew that all men had the basis of righteousness within themselves, as well as within the tradition they followed. This allowed him great leeway and the ability to teach each in the way he particularly followed. He was never to ask anyone to renounce his way and take up the task of another. Instead, he insisted on seeing better that light which was a part of each person's inner being. He asked every person to root his life in truth and cease to run about in the blindness of self-interest. The problems he found around him were deeply enmeshed in the mistaken notions and attitudes of religious bigotry as well as in class and caste hierarchies. He strove to bring the Hindu and the Muslim fanatics to see clearly what they were doing to their lives and how their conduct caused endless suffering and harm to all communities. Righteousness and truthfulness had to be followed every moment to remove the

contradictions of a false life attached to false social and moral sanctions. A truthful life leads to the direct sense of the real where we need not create in our minds distorted interpretations, leading to mutual suspicion and misery.

At a time when Hinduism and Islam often behaved as hostile and irreconcilable faiths, he would not side exclusively with one or the other. Each had its inner depth and each system of religion and thought sought to bring through some traditions and actions a deeper realization of truthful living. In this context, Guru Nanak declared: "There is no Hindu and there is no Muslim." Harmony was lost in the contest of maintaining surface patterns. Holding too strongly to the outer name of the religion one is led away from inner cultivation. In such a situation, one's life becomes a blind interaction with the "chosen names" and a negative reaction towards "other names." Here conflict has its roots.

But at the same time Guru Nanak did not degrade any way of life. He adopted all creeds in dress and attitude to the fullest extent so long as the spirit of fellowship was meaningfully adhered to. He would enter mosques and temples, praying in devotion with their members. He sought continually to bring out the best in all that he encountered, for what he himself found he knew to be everywhere. He laid stress on the best that was already there, instead of advocating new teaching.

During his travels among the Muslims, his participation with them extended as far as he found sincerity. When hypocrisy and dogmatism turned Islam into a formal creed, Guru Nanak would deliberately contradict the rituals so that he could arouse those in his presence to notice him. He knew that a person of deep devotion could not be upset by any acts or attitudes, but instead would welcome them. But as the spirit of religion becomes stale, blind following does not allow for the richness of man's diverse ways. As Guru Nanak brought the wrath of the blind believers upon himself, he would take the opportunity to spread among them the ideas which extended beyond their narrow concept. His insistence was continually on an inner refinement to bring the heart to rest in eternal peace. His comments on turning the outer aspects of Islam to the inner cultivation bring this out well:

Let mercy be thy mosque, faith thy prayermat; and honest living thy Quran.

Humility thy circumcision; and good conduct thy fast.

Thus dost thou become a true Muslim.

If pious works be thy Kaaba, and Truth thy teacher and good deeds thy prayer,

And if thy rosary be of His will, the Lord, yea, will keep thy honour.⁵²

During Guru Nank's involvement in Islam, certain characteristics of his belief show themselves as he agrees with parts of Islamic belief, and

disagrees with other parts of it. Hitti has summed up Muhammad's teachings in these few words:

There is only one God. He is the creator, all-powerful, ever-living. Muhammad is His messenger. There is a judgement day. Splendid rewards in Paradise await those who obey His commands. Terrible punishment in Hell is the lot of those who disregard them.⁵⁴

Guru Nanak fully acknowledged the first part of the teaching. In one of his songs he speaks of God in this way: "He is Allah, unknowable, unfathomable, the Creator, the cause, the beneficent. All the world cometh and goeth and only the Lord of Mercy stays."⁵⁵ He had no divergence of opinion regarding this fundamental aspect of all religions, and of the vastness of God's transcendental and immanent reality.

But to the place given to Muhammad, Guru Nanak could not agree. Guru Nanak never denied that Muhammad was a great spiritual teacher; he only questioned the exclusively high position given to a particular individual. "The first is the Name of God. There are many prophets as His gatekeepers."⁵⁶ Although Muslims admitted other prophets, the unrivalled and immutable position of Muhammad and the Quran was the essential part of their creed. It is this exclusiveness which made Islam for many Muslims distinct from other religions. As Guru Nanak was thoroughly bent upon removing all ideas of special statuses and distinctions in any religion, he had to attack this stronghold of exclusiveness.

He was never in conflict with the truth of Islam. For a great part of his teaching reiterates monotheism. His idea of one God and one path testifies to this. But he was careful on its interpretation:

There's but one road and one door;
To reach up to the Self the Guru is the ladder;
And beauteous is the Master, whom one seeth there,
And all bliss is in His True Name.⁵⁷

Here is the fundamental tenet of Islam, as of Hindu monotheism, lacking only the name of a particular religious leader. The founder of Islam could easily be substituted for a supreme prophet or a "Guru," but not as the only messenger of God. Yet Guru Nanak knew that a deeply spiritual Muslim reached an inner harmony which could even contradict this doctrine. Therefore his insistence was continually on the inner purity which would bring about the greater insight that leads to the acceptance of the richness of the Lord's greater reality. "Practise thou Truth and Truth alone: For vain is every other attachment."⁵⁸

Yet it needs to be kept in mind that Guru Nanak did not argue in the negative. He did not emphasize before others the ignorance and the misdeeds of any particular religion. Rather through example and song he sought again and again to lead all those he met to a greater under-

standing. Although we can find indirectly in his songs his attacks on fanaticism, they were usually to emphasize the deeper roots of Islam :

It is difficult, indeed, to be a true Muslim. If a man possesseth the following qualities, then alone is he a true Muslim. First, let the religion of the Prophet become sweet to him and then with the brush (of humility) let him scrub himself clean of the possession of pride. And then with faith in the founder of religion let him break the illusion about life and death, accept God's will and believing the Creator as supreme, lose his self. And last, if he is compassionate to all beings, he will be worthy of being called a true Muslim.⁵⁹

Guru Nanak continually spoke of the mark of religion as lying within every person. He insisted that it was one's duty to cultivate an ethic which brought one into harmony with all beings. Disunity and separateness and exclusiveness destroyed the true unity of all :

Through false talks one gathereth nothing but falsehood. Thou sayest thy prayers five times and giveth them five names. But let truth be thy first prayer, honest living the second and working for the good of all, the third. Let good intentions of the mind be the fourth prayer and the praises of the Lord, the fifth. Say thou the prayer of good deeds and thus become thou a true Muslim.⁶⁰

In Guru Nanak's desire to bring greater light and understanding to the world, he travelled much in Muslim areas, going as far west—it is said—to Mecca, the holy city of Islam. He dressed as a Muslim pilgrim and shouted the Muslim call to prayer. This brought him into close harmony with those about him. But at night, while going to sleep he did not care in which particular direction his feet were stretched. This was considered by some to be a sacrilegious act. Guru Nanak simply asked those present to find a direction in which God did not exist. Such an answer overcame their hostility and calmed them in their extreme outlook.

This same criticism which emphasizes the spiritual development of all persons, Guru Nanak levelled against the Hindu community. Here also he found people adhering to exclusive formulations as a way of life. And again that meant the pursuing of a conflict as different personalities held to different formulations of the one truth. As different sects and individuals clung to their own narrow peculiarities they defied others. The outer side was solidified and mistakenly believed to be the inner. Guru Nanak persistently refused to side with any single formulation :

God is neither pleased by making music,
Nor recitation of the Vedas;
Nor through yoga, nor by becoming knowledge conscious;
Nor by abiding ever in sadness;
Nor through beauty, possessions and revelries;
Nor by wandering naked at the places of pilgrimage,

Nor by offering alms in charity,
 Nor by sitting alone in wilderness,
 Nor by dying as a warrior on the battlefield,
 Nor by rolling in dust;
 Yea, God taketh only that into account
 That one loveth with the whole mind,
 And if one is imbued with the True Name.⁶¹

The weakness of the Hindu society lay in its divisions. The barriers set up did not allow a meeting of the people. Strength could not arise because unity and clarity were not encouraged in the social and religious orders. This difficulty arose from two sides, the quibbling of the Hindu priests, and the persistently repressive attitude of the Muslim conquerors whose main intent was to maintain their privileged position.

When Guru Nanak had to face these problems, he always worked towards a constructive policy. This meant the internal strengthening of the people themselves. He did not overstress the difficult attitude which existed between the Hindus and the Muslims. His emphasis continually lay on the bringing out of a strength and perception which would see and reach beyond discordance. Among the Hindus as well as among the Muslims, he brought out the best existing within the traditions of both:

Six are the systems, six their teachers, of six different kinds the way
 they teach;
 But the Teacher of teachers is He, the Lord alone, though manifested
 as many.
 Yea, in whichever way are His praises sung, that way alone is
 worthy of their praise.⁶²

Guru Nanak's teachings were never exclusive. It was not outside of one's life and tradition that one should look for truth, but rather truth was its very foundation. This meant Nanak had to reinterpret that truth which always was. There was never a need to insist on something new and the giving up of what already existed. Yet it meant a shattering of illusions and false traditions. It meant that greater effort was needed to see things clearly. It meant that the narrow outlook had to be dropped.

Commenting on the Vedas he asked those he met to see clearly their true import. "If one reads the Vedas and considers the holy Word of Vyasa, one finds that all the *rishis*, the Lord's devotees and men of spiritual discipline were imbued with the Name, the Treasury of all that is Good."⁶³ The identification that many persons made with different aspects of their tradition had only increased their ego, causing incorrect interpretations. This contradicts so much of what seems to be taken for granted. But an attempt to bring the other side of man's being is the greatest of all teachings: "To slay the self, this, yea, is the essence of

the six *shastras*, and to realize the light of the All-pervading Perfect Lord in all."⁶⁴

The slaying of the self did not entail the renunciation of one's household duties and living in the forest. Nor did it mean the life of the householder alone. Such distinctions could not be completely true. "The household and the forest are alike for one who liveth in poise."⁶⁵ To live with set distinctions could not be to follow the inner light. If we continually follow the shadows of changing things, we never attain enlightenment.

Guru Nanak asks us to bring to the world, in the life we partake of, the stability gained through devotion to the Divine. It is the fulfilment. All share the ultimate source of life. "Caste and power are of no account, for, every soul appears new or in its true colours before Him."⁶⁵ The distinctions only separate us and we misuse power to hold these false barriers setting man's mind far from the true freedom inherent in all.

Guru Nanak challenged the world he found himself in. Travelling widely, he sang of the joy of the Lord, seeking to bring the illumination he saw into the hearts of others. He knew he did not come with a secret that others before him had not found. He sought to lead men's hearts toward the Truth that they had realized age after age in all lands, but which they had forgotten:

They, who hear of the greatness of the Lord, say He is Great,
But he alone knoweth who seeth (Him).
O priceless, indescribable Thou;
They who describe Thee, merge in Thee.
O great, O high, our Master,
Unfathomable, of virtues immeasurable,
No one knows how vast is Thy expanse.
The wise men of intuition exercised their wisdom and intuition,
The valuator put value on Thee;
The wise, the seer, the holy of the holies
Could enunciate but little of Thy worth.
All Truth, all penance, all goodness,
All miracles, all merits of the adepts,
The intuitive powers, without Thee, no one hath found.
He, on whom is Thy grace, hath them; yea,
in no otherwise.
Who, yea, is the utterer
That can utter the whole of Thy treasureful virtues?
Him, on whom Thou bestowest (Thy mercy),
cannot but bask in it.
Sayeth Nanak, 'The Truth alone saves us,
yea, the Truth alone.'⁶⁷

The development of Sikhism after Guru Nanak offers a challenge to the student of its history. The contrasts which arose among its followers in comparison with its founder appear at times to be at odds. Guru

Nanak has asked that we kindle the light of God in determining our relationships to our fellowmen. But the force of history seems to have added its weight in the shaping of some powerful Sikh followers.

The Mughal empire was being established during the lifetime of Guru Nanak. The empire was aristocratic, militaristic and administrative. Its relationship to the people depended on the whims of its leaders. Under Akbar a great sensitivity to the people of India had developed. Akbar remoulded the strict interpretations of Islamic Law, offering greater opportunities to the Hindus. Here a sense of participation by the people of the empire could grow and a meaningful relationship to the administrative government could be established.

But Akbar's successors did not hold as great a sensitivity to the people of India. Therefore a distance was set up between the rulers and the ruled and antagonism gained its place. The government of the later Mughal leaders became more and more dependent on Military strength and the use of display of force to hold its sway. Here the ruled people developed an attitude which went against the government which was no longer humanely related to them.

The richness of India's background became intolerant to the rulers following Akbar's death in 1605. Here some tolerance came only to those Indians who would pay some sort of homage to Islam and denounce their own heritage. The tradition the Indians had grown in had to be rejected for a change which allowed only the convert some sort of opportunity in life.

Against this policy, many Indians took a strong stand and sought to maintain the richness of their diverse ways. A harmony was greatly desired where each could work in his own way. This was possible under Akbar's rule, during which cooperation with the government did not entail conflict with each person's commitment in life. But the later Mughal emperors demanded cooperation without consideration.

The ideals established by Guru Nanak among his followers were in conflict with those of the later emperors. Guru Nanak had to stand against Babar's insensitivity to India's people. The Sikhs could not reach a meaningful compromise with "the Emperor's avowed policy of religious persecution."⁸⁸ There could only arise a tremendous reaction to such a policy. The overwhelming strength which the government used to gain its sway made peaceful protest seemingly impossible. In this situation, the naturally protesting attitude of the Sikhs developed into a military stand against the source of intolerance, as seen in the emperor's army.

In weighing the political conditions of the country, the Sikh community went to the losing side in the rise of Akbar's great-grandson, Aurangzeb. This only increased the emperor's fury and desire to persecute the rebellious community. The tension only increased.

Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the ten Sikh Gurus, has said:

For this purpose have I come into the world;
 To uphold and spread righteousness,
 To protect and save the good and saintly persons
 And to destroy and uproot the villainous
 tyrant and evil-doers.⁶⁹

In a way, we could say that the upholding and spreading of righteousness is the mainstay of all spiritual leaders. But in its interpretation, various formulations come forth. It is here that some parts of the Sikh community turned away from the guidance set up by Guru Nanak.

The Sikh community, when faced with the threat of the Mughal power, surrendered its peaceful ideals and took upon itself the same weapons that the aggressors had used to gain their sway. Throughout India, the emperor's power was maintained by the use of brute force. This attitude became reflected throughout the land as the dissident groups adopted similar means. The Sikh community followed suit and "to destroy and uproot the villainous tyrant and evil-doers" it was necessary to become more and more aggressively militant.

Guru Nanak had insisted on the need for action to bring the light of Truth to others. But he always refrained from adopting the weapons of hatred and anger which he saw dominating those enmeshed in passions and greed. Many times during his travels he had to face hostile persons bent on violence to his very person. But in his refusal to adopt such means and in his unbounded praises of the Lord he was able to win over large numbers of those he encountered. Had he returned the violence he found so prevalent during his lifetime, he would only have increased the fire he had found to be consuming so many.

Differences are natural to men in their physical appearance and mental outlook. It is part of life's infinite variety. There needs to be no irreconcilable difficulties in regard to the diversity of cultures and social changes. Yet they do arise when the differences are misunderstood and taken to be ultimately real. When this happens and we mistake the distinct features as ultimates of reality we judge others by fixed standards and create eternal enmities where they do not exist.

When realization occurs, these differences are understood as part of life's variety and not mistakenly held as the fixed reality. The whole of life with its many ways is firmly grounded in an indescribable reality. In seeking to convey its meaning, particular notions are suggested, bringing forth diverse ways and views. But the views are not the final reality. Guru Nanak has brought this out vividly. He seeks to clarify the difference between what we consider the way to the Truth and Truth itself:

Build thou the boat of meditation and self-control. Then thou shalt
 cross unhampered the sea of life. There is then no sea to be crossed,
 no tides to be contended with, so easy becomes thy path.⁷⁰

And again:

When a man possesseth the wealth and the capital of Truth and liveth naturally in God, there will be no boat, no water, no sinking and no loss.⁷¹

The difference between life engrossed in the world and that found in the light of God is substantial although not absolute. On the one hand, relative judgements lead to siding with certain groups in contrast to others. In the case of Sikhism, as in the case of any religion, we find some differences between the founder of the faith and the disciples.

In the search for truth there is the basic need to adhere to some eternal doctrine, even if it is as simple as the Name of the Lord. It is still a bridge to gain that freedom which leaves behind all doctrines. According to Guru Nanak, the sense of supreme identity is possible; man can gain transcendence and love, and he can change the world by accepting it as a miracle. Guru Nanak held the key of wonder: 'Wonderstruck am I to behold wonder everywhere.'⁷²

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XLV

GURU NANAK—THE PARALLEL REFORMATIONS

P. M. WYLAM

The period of world history into which Guru Nanak was born (1469-1539) has a remarkable significance in both Eastern and Western religious and philosophical thought. It has often been noted that Martin Luther's life (1483-1546) and his vigorous campaign against the corruption which had overtaken the Roman Catholic Church have a strange parallel with Guru Nanak's campaign against the superstitious elements of Hinduism. It would be wrong, however, to compare the whole historical period between 1400 and 1600 in India with that in Europe. There was at that time hardly any contact between the two continents. The rare European travellers and the small amount of trade which passed through the Middle East did not take with them any considerable exchange of ideas, religious, philosophical or cultural. Only through Islam did India receive any remotely Western thought, and Europe knew very little of Indian civilization. In Europe, the period known as the Renaissance was in full swing. The word, Renaissance, was first used in 1855 by Jules Michelet writing in his *History of France* (Paris, 1855):

The lovely word 'Renaissance' reminds art-lovers only of the coming of a new style and the free rise of fancy. For the scholar, it is the revival of the study of antiquity; for the lawyers, the light of day shining on the discordant chaos of our old customs.

Is that all? ... These prejudiced minds have only forgotten two little things which belong to that age more than to all its predecessors: the discovery of the world, the discovery of man.

The sixteenth century, in its full and legitimate extension, runs from Columbus to Copernicus, from Copernicus to Galileo, from the discovery of the earth to that of heavens.

That is when man found himself. While Vesalius and Servetus revealed to him his physical life, Luther and Calvin, Dumoulin, Cujas, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Cervantes revealed his moral life...¹

Thus, by Renaissance, he means the whole development of man during the period following the Middle or Dark Ages in Europe. The Renaissance was, in fact, at first, a revival of the arts in Italy where sculpture, painting, architecture and poetry reached new and splendid heights of

achievement from Giotto to Michelangelo and the poet, Dante. There appeared also a revived interest in the ancient and classical learning. Rabelais mentions Greek, Hebrew, Latin and Chaldean as examples of the languages studied. Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were rediscovered, and manuscripts which had spent the Dark Ages buried dormant in quiet monastery libraries were at last dusted, read, translated and studied by new generations of scholars.

Science, especially astronomy, took on a new air of respectability and was pursued with a fresh and logical approach despite the strong opposition of the Church. Galileo was denounced for his views, but nothing could stem the strong tide of truth which swept across Europe. Explorers at last sailed round the world and discovered America and Australia, so that vast new horizons opened up for the adventurous men of Europe. In the field of medicine, doctors again began to explore anatomy and to base their medical knowledge on facts rather than on superstition, tradition and guess-work. Music began to develop from the medieval plain-song of the monasteries and the simple ballads of the country folk, towards the more refined madrigals, part-songs and instrumental orchestras, while musical instruments themselves became enormously improved and many new ones were evolved.

Parallel with the new appreciation of the arts and learning, there was an interest in elaborate dress, domestic comforts, spectacular public buildings and, in many European countries, a change in the methods of government, concepts of law and the means of administration. In fact, the Western world was moving from being primarily God-centred in the traditional sense to being man-centred.

The invention which had the greatest impact on Western civilization, however, was printing, which so much helped the spread of learning, the growth of mass education and the consequent dissemination of new ideas in the fields of both science and religion.

In India, however, there was no such simultaneous or extensive explosion of the arts or popular learning. Throughout the Middle Ages, northern India had been afflicted by a long series of invasions and struggles for power between rival fractions of Turks, Afghans and Mongols, all of whom were Muslim but by no means united by reason of their common faith. The common people of the Punjab, whatever their religion, suffered time after time from fighting and marauders, heavy taxation, misrule and injustice; but, on the whole, the Hindus suffered more, since being the "unbelievers," the heaviest burdens of taxation were placed on them.

At about the time that the European Renaissance was beginning, Daulat Khan Lodhi was elected to the throne of Delhi, sixteen years after Timur's destruction of that city. It was not until 1451, however, that the Lodhi Dynasty gained full power under Bahlol Lodhi. It was during the comparatively peaceful era of his reign, that Guru Nanak was born. Nanak was just 20 when Bahlol was succeeded by his son, Sikandar Lodhi, who

died in 1517. Sikandar was a just and good ruler, who cared for the common people and listened personally to their complaints. He was also a patron of the arts and learning and himself a writer of Persian verse.

It was quite usual for the death of the monarch to be followed by a series of plots, assassinations and political scheming, especially when the successor nominated was weak or otherwise unsuited to take on the burdens and responsibilities of kingship. Sikandar Lodhi's eldest son, Ibrahim, who succeeded him, alienated many of the nobles, including his own family, by his harshness and misrule. It must have been during the confusion marking the beginning of his reign that Guru Nanak composed his famous verse:

This dark age is a knife, kings are butchers,
Justice has taken wing and flown;
In this black night of falsehood
No moon of truth is seen to rise.

Babar, who was a descendant of Jenghiz Khan, and then ruler of Kabul, was invited by Ibrahim's enemies to invade India. He conquered the Punjab in 1525, sealing his victory with the battle of Panipat, in which Ibrahim perished on 21st April, 1526.

Babar went on from strength to strength, defeating both the Rajputs and the Afghans, but he died in 1530 before he had time to establish his rule properly. His son, Humayun, succeeded at 23, but he was not a ruler strong enough to be able to consolidate his position. He was defeated by Sher Shah in 1539, the year of Guru Nanak's death, and he became a homeless wanderer for the next 15 years.

The atmosphere of uncertainty and turmoil in northern India, therefore, was not conducive to the flowering of the arts of learning. Such luxuries need rich patrons, and though there was an interest in poetry, architecture and science, and very often the rulers acted as patrons, more of their resources were spent on wars or luxurious living. The arts and sciences merely continued as they had done before, with no new or great ideas to inspire them. As far as the ordinary people were concerned, the Mughal rulers were no better than the Lodhis had been and the change from one to the other involved them in the usual kind of misery, sacking, looting, slavery, rape and massacre.

The religious and cultural climate remained virtually unchanged. The arts were in a state of atrophy; painting and architecture continued in their traditional forms. The Hindus, bound intellectually and morally by a rigid caste system which precluded any originality of thought or adventurous progress in any direction, social or philosophical, were, in their turn, oppressed and taxed by their masters, the Muslims, who were not hampered by any religious obligation to adhere to an inferior status, but who regarded it as their right to be rulers.

There was no revival of learning such as Europe was experiencing. Learning was in the hands of the few, the higher castes among the Hindus, and was based mainly on religious or semi-religious books in ancient Sanskrit. Through the influence of Islam, numerology, medicine and, in a limited sense, science were cultivated; but the study of religious texts remained of primary importance, and the Muslims, too, had their favoured class of scholars.

However, despite the enormous difference in intellectual climate between Europe and India, there was an important parallel in the development of the religious changes which took place in the two areas.

The Reformation in Europe should not be confused with the Renaissance. Renaissance, a word meaning rebirth, meant a whole series of changes including the awakening of art, literature and intellectual pursuits of all kinds; indeed, the threshold of progress first into the Age of Reason in the eighteenth century and later into the Romantic Age and the period when the worship of Nature and Man became supreme. It heralded the beginning of humanism, the man-centred philosophy which still continues to dominate our thought in the present day. By the Reformation, on the other hand, is meant that part of the awakening which involved a change in the established Christian Church. The Reformation was undoubtedly a direct result of the new concept of humanism and the awakening of individualism in the Western man. In Europe, before the real Reformation under Martin Luther, there had already been several attempts to put right the evils which had invaded the Roman Catholic Church. Wycliffe in England and John Huss of Hungary were the originators of these ideas.

This movement had its roots in the humanist movement of the Renaissance, for this is what had first inspired men to think independently without the trammels and restrictions of ecclesiasticism. The word 'humanism' is derived from *humanitas* meaning "mental culture befitting man, or liberal education." It meant, therefore, the study of the languages and literature of ancient Greece and Rome. The humanists were lovers of antiquity, learning and beauty of form. They favoured a broader outlook on life and a humanity of spirit which was a reaction against the dogmatism of the Middle Ages and its cramping tenets and laws. The humanists restored the enquiring spirit of the ancient Greeks and freed the human mind for further exploration of the nature of man's condition in the world.

There were already precursors of humanism in the thirteenth century but it was in the fourteenth century that the movement really began in Italy. During the Middle Ages men had not been conscious of themselves as individuals but only as members of small and immediate communities; travel and communication were difficult and Europe was constricted by the feudal system of rule and a monastically controlled Church which dominated both men's bodies and their minds. The new freedom of thought which began in Italy during the fourteenth century developed

individualism, the doctrine that man should think for himself and the idea that the universe may be explained in terms of man's existence.

One of the first humanists was Petrarch (1304-1374), the great lyric poet, but it was also in Dante (1265-1321) and Roger Bacon (1210-1293) that the spirit of the new age showed itself. Boccaccio (1313-1375) was also an exponent of the new learning and both Boccaccio and Petrarch were enthusiastic collectors of Greek and Latin manuscripts. The lectures of the humanists soon attracted great interest in Italy and gradually the movement spread into Germany, Holland, Spain, France and England. Melanchthon in Germany, Sir Thomas More in England and Erasmus in Holland were prominent humanists.

Contemporary with Boccaccio and Petrarch was John Wycliffe (1320-1384), born in Yorkshire and educated at Oxford where he became a doctor of theology and a teacher of divinity. He became involved in the English Parliament's refusal to pay homage and tribute to the Pope and is said to have denounced the Pope, charging him with simony, covetousness, ambition and tyranny. Wycliffe's opinions spread and caused great alarm to the Church which took proceedings against him but he was released on condition that he should refrain from preaching obnoxious doctrines. However, in 1381 when he publicly challenged the doctrine of transubstantiation, he was proclaimed a heretic and many of his writings were burnt and some of his followers imprisoned. He was a very considerable writer and he made a translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate but, of course, he had not the advantages of printing by which his views might have been even more widely disseminated.

Wycliffe's most notable follower was the Hungarian, John Huss (1378-1415), a lecturer in theology and philosophy at the University of Prague. He studied Wycliffe's writings and was well acquainted with his denunciation of Papal indulgences. The Archbishop of Prague, as a result of Huss's interest, had 200 volumes of Wycliffe's writings burnt in 1410 and prohibited Huss from preaching. Huss was summoned to appear before Pope John XXIII and he was eventually excommunicated. He continued to denounce the Papacy in his writings, attacking transubstantiation, the belief in the Pope and the saints, the efficacy of the absolution of a vicious priest, unconditional obedience to earthly rulers and simony. His views found great support among both the nobility and the common people, and Huss, under letters of safe conduct from the Pope, attended the Council of Constance to defend his views before the Church. Despite all promises of protection, Huss was condemned to death and burnt alive on 6th July, 1415.

Thus, in Europe, the scene was set for the Reformation, and the climate of public opinion was prepared for Martin Luther's open revolt against the established Church. Meanwhile in India, similar reactions against the established orders of both Brahmanism and orthodox Islam were taking place, almost as if an invisible breeze of freedom of thought were

wafting over the whole world independently of the agency of men in ordinary communication with one another. The famous Bhakti saints of Hinduism and the Sufi saints of Islam, despite different bases of belief, came close to each other finding common ground in a purely spiritual and highly emotional approach to the worship of God which became divested of the trappings of ritual, sacrifice and superstition.

Shaikh Farid was one of the earliest of these (1173-1265). He left a line of successors who preserved his teaching and his hymns which were passed on by the twelfth in spiritual succession, Shaikh Ibrahim, to Guru Nanak, and later these were included in the *Guru Granth*. One hymn, in particular, vividly reminds us of the words of Jesus:

But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

—MATTHEW, 1: 39

Farid, should any man smite thee,
Return not blow for blow,
Nay, kiss his feet that smiteth thee,
And go peacefully homeward.²

Namdev (1269-1344), who was a tailor by profession, and Ramanand (1340-1430), who brought Hindu and Muslim mysticism together, were both of this school. Pipa (1408-1468) was a disciple of Ramanand and a friend of Ravidas and Kabir (1380-1460). Kabir, a Muslim weaver, was for a while a disciple of Ramanand, but he greatly disliked formal or institutional religion towards which Ramanand was inclined, and Kabir's hymns reflect his contempt for caste, religious ritual, pilgrimages and the general hypocrisy of the priesthood. Some Western writers, who have mentioned Sikhism in works of comparative religion, have committed the unpardonable mistake of ascribing the founding of Sikhism to Kabir, and of even saying that Guru Nanak was a disciple of Kabir. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

In comparing the precursors of Guru Nanak with the precursors of Luther, we shall certainly find significant differences in emphasis, but the main similarity is in their desire to reach back towards the purity of their original faiths, and to divest religious practices of the many evils, general hypocrisy and corruption, which had entered into them.

The kind of practices which the reformers deplored were remarkably similar in the East and in the West. There is a great parallel between Hinduism and Catholicism in certain respects. In both, the common people make use of highly coloured and stylized pictures and images to stimulate the feeling of devotion, and they address their prayers to these; and though God is recognized as the ultimate power, yet his personal attributes and aspects are vested in the minor gods by the Hindus, whereas among the Roman Catholics, they are often transferred to the saints. This may not be the orthodox belief officially approved, but it is often so in

practice. Both religions use incense and lamps or candles. Both take images in ceremonial processions.

Among the saints of both religions, there is a tendency towards asceticism and a belief in the spiritual value of celibacy. They both accord great importance to shrines and relics of saints and often attribute miraculous powers to these. The belief that God is incarnated on earth as a divine person is common to Hinduism and to nearly all kinds of Christianity, the Unitarians being the most notable exception.

The pre-Reformation Church was ruled by a hierarchy of bishops and priests who were largely corrupt. The Papacy itself was involved in political intrigues and some highly questionable financial deals. Ecclesiastical preferment was generally obtained by graft, bribery and, not infrequently, difficult people were removed by judicial murder or secret plots. The Church thus came to possess great wealth and it owned a high proportion of land throughout Europe. Mendicant orders of monks lived greedily off the backs of the poor and the people were ruled by superstition and fear. They were mortally afraid of eternal damnation in the fires of hell and of witchcraft to whose influence they ascribed all manner of diseases and disasters. They revered the bones and relics of saints and made pilgrimages to tombs and shrines.

In India during the same period, the Hindus were also dominated by the Brahmins who became more and more wealthy by virtue of the religious offices they performed for remuneration. Itinerant holy men, many of them far from holy, begged their way from door to door making comfortable living from the superstitious ignorance of their benefactors. In many of his hymns, Guru Nanak denounced the general hypocrisy and corruption of the people:

They who call themselves virtuous, commit sin and pretend they are doing good.

'Gurus' go to private houses to impart instruction.

A woman loveth man for the money he earns for her;

Otherwise he may come or go as he pleases.

Nobody obeys the Shastras or the Vedas:

Everybody worships himself.

The Qazi sits to administer justice;

He turns over his beads and invokes God,

But he takes bribes and does injustice.

If anyone should call him to account, he will read and cite texts.

The Mohammedan creed fills the ears and hearts of the Hindus.

They carry tales to the judge and plunder the populace.

They make squares for cooking so as to appear pure.

See what the Hindus are like.

Jogis with long hair and ashes keep wives.

Children scream before and behind them.

They miss the right road and do not obtain union with God.

Why do they put ashes on their heads?

Nanak, this is the state of this degenerate age,

That men only speak of themselves and think themselves the best.⁵

The majority of people believed that they could buy their way to salvation in the next world by costly sacrifices, rituals and gifts to Brahmins in this one. Even Muslims had sunk so low as to reverence the tombs of saints; and both the Hindus and the Muslims believed in the efficacy of pilgrimages and fasting as an aid to religious merit. In both the East and the West, there was a firm belief in the virtue of asceticism, the mortification of the flesh and celibacy—even ordinary sexual activity within marriage was thought to be an obstacle to religious experience. The status of women in both worlds was extremely low and they were considered to be both intellectually and spiritually inferior to men, though probably more so in India than in Europe. In Europe, great importance was given to 'noble birth' as in India high caste was revered, and there was little social or occupational mobility in either the East or in the West.

In the same way that Wycliffe and Huss denounced their Church leaders, so did Kabir and Farid condemn the tyranny of the Brahmins and the hypocrisy and pride of those who purported to be holy and devout. There was on both sides also, a strong assertion that religion in the true sense should be directly accessible to the ordinary man without the mediation of the priest. For this reason, they discarded, on the one side, Sanskrit, and on the other, Latin, and they composed hymns and wrote texts in the common vernacular.

The final break in the Church came with Martin Luther who founded Protestant Christianity, although he had at first no intention of doing anything more than reform the existing Church. The greatest change in India was brought about by Guru Nanak who founded the Sikh Faith, although his first intention was simply to persuade both Muslims and Hindus to adhere to whatever was good and right in their own religions.

Martin Luther was just 14 years younger than Guru Nanak. In the purely spiritual sense, he was not, of course, comparable. Neither his contemporaries nor posterity were to regard him as a saint and though his own degree of spiritual suffering and conflict could have turned him into a mystic, he did not, in fact, tend towards mysticism. In an age of corruption, however, he was a remarkably honest and outspoken man. He began his career as an Augustinian monk and a professor of theology at Wittenburg University. In his youth, he was tormented by a sense of his own sinfulness, which was apparently quite without foundation, and he sometimes suffered from extremes of depression and joy. He found that prayer, confessions, mortification, fasting and charity did not relieve his feelings of guilt and, accordingly, he came to believe that salvation was attainable by faith alone.

He maintained that it was the supreme sacrifice involved in Christ's whole life which was instrumental in saving the believer. Man is, from birth, a sinner who has no power to take the first steps towards salvation. God's grace must come entirely through His own moving, although man does not deserve it. The man, who is then made acceptable to God

by the fact that God has accomplished the unmerited miracle of grace in his heart, is then enabled to do good in the world and to live according to God's will. Good works performed first, without faith in Jesus Christ or the gift of grace, do not count towards salvation.

Guru Nanak's compositions seem to suggest that he puts good works and faith (*nam-simran*) on a basis of equal importance, neither being effective without the other:

All men's accounts shall be taken in God's court;
And no one shall be saved without good works.
He who repeats the name of the Truest of the true,
Shall not, O Nanak, be examined hereafter.⁴

But like Luther, he teaches that the move towards salvation comes first from God:

It is God who causes man to perform good acts and makes him steadfast
in His service.
When man fears God, the filth of his soul and body departs,
And God himself gives him divine knowledge.⁵

To Luther and his contemporaries, such theological distinctions were highly important and provoked much serious debate. By no means all the reformers agreed on such points; notably Erasmus, the humanist, with whom Luther carried on correspondence for a time. He maintained the more Platonic view that man is able to make the initial move towards salvation by which he can first earn the gift of grace. The Swiss Reformation leader, Zwingli, also disagreed strongly with Luther on several points; in particular, on the question of the divine presence in the communion bread and wine.

Luther was influenced by the mysticism of late medieval Germany which held, among other things, that there could be direct communication between God and man, so that the importance of the Church as an institution was greatly reduced. This idea has an interesting parallel in Guru Nanak's assertion that God could not be reached through institutionalized ceremonies and prayers performed by the priest or Brahmin, but by direct communion, by God's grace, when He so pleases:

Hear me, O Pandit with the religious ceremonies:
Meditation on the Supreme Being is the only religious ceremony, my
brother,
From which happiness is derived.
You stand chattering the Shastras and Vedas, my brother,
And make it a worldly affair,
The filth of sin which is within thee
Shall not be washed away by hypocrisy.⁶

At first, Luther attracted the support of many humanists because of his opposition to many of the institutions of the Church which oppressed the

people, but the humanists optimistically believed in the supremacy of man and his power to master the universe, whereas Luther was inclined to demote man to the level of a helpless being before God. In fact, up to a point, Luther's view is very much in tune with Guru Nanak's:

Ye have no power to speak nor in silence listen,
 To grant or give away,
 Ye have no power to live or die,
 Ye have no power to acquire wealth and dominion,
 To compel the mind to thought or reason,
 To escape the world and fly,
 He who hath the pride of power
 Let him try and see;
 O Nanak, before the Lord
 There is no low or high degree.⁷

Guru Nanak's philosophy is different from Luther's in that the laws of karma or retribution give man every opportunity to redeem himself without the need of a divine saviour. Man is helpless only in the sense that he has no power to insist on his own perverse will. God allows him to do evil but he has to pay for it sooner or later, and God, in fact, can stop him if He so wills. If man invokes God's aid, he may become the instrument of many good works, but it is really God who acts, not man.

Some of Luther's followers went to extremes which Luther himself did not approve. He had no wish to stray far from the basic dogmas of the Church and he supported such beliefs as the real, physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist, though he quarrelled with the Catholic idea of transubstantiation. Again, these are distinctions which non-Christians will find it difficult to appreciate. The Catholic Church defined its belief of transubstantiation at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) in order to clarify its differences with the Protestant Churches. It insisted that the communion bread and wine was entirely transformed into the body and blood of Christ and that only in appearance did it remain like bread and wine. Luther's teaching was called consubstantiation and he believed that Christ's body and blood were substantially present in the Eucharist but that the physical presence of the bread and wine also remained. Zwingli and Carlstadt, on the other hand, taught that Christ was only present in the Eucharist in the spiritual and symbolic sense.

Carlstadt also rejected the practice of infant baptism. Muntzer, even more extreme, rejected the authority of the Bible. Luther strongly supported the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, but he believed that it should be easily accessible to the people in their own vernaculars instead of in Latin or Greek. He spent some years translating the Bible into German, completing the work in 1534. In this, he was, of course, like Guru Nanak who also believed that religious hymns and stories should be in the language that everyone could understand.

Luther's first great clash with the Church came in 1517 when he nailed

to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg an attack on the practice of selling indulgences. These offered remissions of penance in purgatory on papal authority to sinners who had received absolution, and they were often declared in the most extravagant terms by those who were engaged in selling them. Luther strongly objected to the language used by the sellers and to the idea that the Pope could arrogate to himself the authority to grant remission of punishment for sins. Parallel to this is Guru Nanak's objection to the Hindu practices of expensive sacrifices and making offerings to Brahmins in order to use their good offices to secure a better after-life.

Luther's attack on indulgences was quickly printed and copies were posted up all over Germany, so that his thesis, which may only have been seen by a few, easily reached thousands. His ideas spread rapidly and provoked both enthusiastic support and strong opposition, so that the European Reformation quickly spread and took root over a few brief years. Guru Nanak's reformation, on the other hand, was spread only by word of mouth and by manuscripts and did not receive the benefit of printing until the advent of the British in India.

In 1525, after his break with the Church, Luther married an ex-nun, Catherina von Bora, and this marriage was eventually blessed with six children. In the Protestant Church subsequently established, ordained priests were not required to be celibate as they were in the Roman Catholic Church. Similarly, Guru Nanak asserted that marriage was no bar to following religious life and that woman was not only the necessary helpmate and companion to man but that she was his equal. Luther delighted in his children and proved to be a model father, taking a fuller and more active part in their care and upbringing than did most European fathers of his time. His wife was industrious and an excellent housekeeper and organizer. The Luther family became a refuge for all who were in trouble and it was famed for its hospitality and happiness. There is an obvious parallel in Guru Nanak's own domestic life and in the emphasis which he laid on family life. Towards the end of his life, he settled down at Kartarpur and established the Sikh community which gave concrete expression to his ideals.

Though it is doubtful if Luther was as strongly in favour of the equality of women with men as was Guru Nanak, he was in favour of their education and he accordingly encouraged the schools in Wittenburg to include facilities for the education of girls.

In the same way as Guru Nanak denied the authority of Brahmin priests, Martin Luther denied the authority of the Pope. The Pope was not, he said, divinely appointed as the sole head of Christendom, but Christendom is composed of the souls of the faithful and the kingdom of God is within. According to Guru Nanak also, God is within us and that no outside authority can have the power to grant or withhold salvation.

In one important respect, Guru Nanak was far in advance of Luther. This was in emphasizing the basic equality and brotherhood of all mankind. According to Guru Nanak, no one should be called high or low because of his birth, but every person should earn a position by his behaviour. Luther's attitude to the peasant's rising was one of severe disapproval. He had no sympathy with those who rose even against unjust rulers and harsh conditions. He believed that the social hierarchy was divinely ordained, although men's souls may be equal before God. It is inconceivable that Guru Nanak could have taken such a view. His successors in Guruship always gave refuge to those in trouble because of the oppressive administration, and it became a principle of Sikhism to be adopted by its followers to aid the victims of misrule.

The social changes which followed Luther's Reformation could not be attributed, strictly speaking, to Luther's teaching. They were the result of the whole intellectual climate of the Renaissance; indeed, the Reformation itself was the result of the Renaissance. Europe was in a state of transition from the feudal system coupled with the overlordship of the Papacy towards independent States freed from the political dominance of the Church. Those who became Protestant freed themselves immediately and completely from all loyalty to the Pope, whereas those who remained Catholic benefited by the Counter Reformation which eventually cleansed the Catholic Church of many of the evils which had beset it. As a result of the reduction of the political power of the Church, the common people began to acquire an interest in government and the middle classes, artisans, tradesmen, artists and musicians came to have a higher status. The foundation was then laid of a secular instead of a theocratic society in Europe.

Education became more widespread and was by no means any longer confined to the religious orders. The common people were able to read the Bible in their own languages and this not only stimulated an interest in religion but also the ability to think, reason and enquire. Written literature also began to increase with the spread of poetry, plays, historical and scientific treatises, political and social pamphlets. The advent of printing made it possible to disseminate widely all kinds of learning and new ideas spread rapidly. With the new colonies becoming established overseas and new opportunities for trade opening up, European horizons were to widen considerably compared with the small world of the Middle Ages.

Guru Nanak's social revolution, on the other hand, rather than altering Indian society as a whole, touched only the lives of individuals and of the communities of Sikhs who adopted the new faith. The status of women was greatly enhanced. They were not only treated with greater respect, but they were accorded full participation in religious life on an equal basis with men. The married state was not only regarded as being compatible with the religious life, but it was recognized to be the

proper and holy way of life for the Sikh. The idea of asceticism was entirely repudiated and to play a full and active part in worldly affairs was made virtuous. Physical culture, sports and games were encouraged; music and congregational worship became part of the people's daily life; literacy and scholarship became commonplace, even though all books were rare and were only produced in manuscript. Caste distinctions were discarded, so that inter-marriage among classes, the remarriage of widows and the community meals especially marked the Sikh social behaviour. The practices of *satee*, female infanticide and *purdah* were forbidden to Sikhs, as also the custom of giving large dowries.

The use of idols was completely discarded, for the Sikhs believed only in One God who is immortal, formless, never incarnated in any form, and accessible to men through prayer and the repetition of His Name. There were no sacrifices, offerings, pilgrimages or fasts and no dietary restrictions. Guru Nanak discredited the superstitious belief in astrology as well as in all ideas of ritual uncleanness. The communal singing of hymns and the general use of music in the Sikh *sangat* has a striking parallel in the Protestant custom of congregational worship and hymn-singing. Guru Nanak, of course, composed a great number of hymns, using the traditional classical *ragas* for their tunes. Martin Luther also wrote some hymns, which have now become widely known and sung throughout the Christian world.

Guru Nanak's social reforms were, in fact, meant to bring about changes in a society which was extremely conservative, and among people who were brought up from birth in a strict Hindu social order, where the family and caste group had such a powerful hold over the individual. Habits of thought ingrained for generations and taken for granted by their holders had to be broken and replaced by new and revolutionary ideas. The Guru emphasized the dignity of manual labour, so that no Sikh should be too proud to do even the most menial task, however exalted his former caste might have been. Such was the fervour and enthusiasm engendered in the Sikhs for the new religion that, despite the strong pressures which must have been felt from the prevailing Hindu society, these reforms took deep root among those who became the Guru's followers. Doubtless, the long and stormy contact between the Hindus and the Muslims had opened the minds of the followers of both these religions to the possibility of a different way of life and converts to Sikhism and sympathizers came from both sides.

Considering how much the Sikh religion had in common with Christian Protestant tradition, it is remarkable how grossly the British failed to understand it when they occupied the Punjab. The reason is twofold. In the first place, by that time, the Sikhs had allowed the purity of the original teaching to become contaminated with some of the less desirable aspects of Hinduism. Caste, which had been entirely eradicated, was allowed to quietly come back; widows sometimes committed *satee*; for

want of organized supervision, the *gurdwaras* had fallen into the hands of Hindu *mahants*, who performed Hindu ceremonies and permitted the use of idols and pictures of Hindu gods in them; and the Sikhs took part in Hindu festivals and pilgrimages. It is small wonder that even today many British writers (like Taya Zinkin, for instance) still describe the Sikhs as a Hindu sect.

In the second place, on the British side, most of the colonial British had scant respect for anything that was not thoroughly European. In their view, India was uncivilized, and all Indians were inferior and unfit to rule themselves; consequently, the cultures and religions of such people were beneath notice. Furthermore, Indian customs were so inexplicably strange to the British that they could not be expected to have the general ability or the patience to understand them. The legend of the 'mysterious East' overawed the European mind. Fortunately, this contemptuous colonial attitude of the new rulers was not shared by all Western people; and quite a number of poets, writers and philosophers of the nineteenth century showed a more intelligent interest in Hindu, Buddhist and other Oriental religious ideas.

It was not until 200 years after Guru Nanak and Luther, however, that the parallel reformations began to have any effect on each other. With the advent of European colonialists into India came the Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant. There was, indeed, very little to choose between them. They regarded all non-Christians as heathens. Seeing the multiplicity of Hindu gods, and the common use of images, they thought the Hindus were idolaters. To them, the Sikhs were merely a fighting class of the Hindus, and even though the Muslims had left their marks in Europe in times gone by, in India, they were no better than the rest. Because of the closed and intolerant attitude of the Christians, the impact of Hinduism on European thought was extremely small at first. That of Sikhism was nil, until the works of Trumpp, Cunningham and Macauliffe. Nevertheless, it can be said that even though the Christians succeeded in converting only small numbers of the Indian populace, the influence of Christianity on India was profound, indeed.

The technique used by the missionaries for their conversion campaigns was one of 'good works.' For, despite the teaching of Luther on good works, they believed that they had to fulfil Christ's ministry of healing, relief of suffering and ignorance. They also carried a firm conviction that belief in Jesus Christ was the one and only way to human salvation. Charitable institutions were undoubtedly a useful instrument in making conversions. The sick, the ignorant and the poor became Christians out of sheer gratitude, if not conviction. In order to spread the word of the Bible, it was also necessary to have literate people, and so the Christian missionaries set up schools, which served not only as centres for spreading literacy and combating general ignorance, but also they were a useful means of catching converts at an early age. As late as 1939, Sunday

schools and churches in Britain were assiduously collecting money for the blatant purpose of converting the heathen in India and elsewhere. The medical services and schools, thus provided, were seen by the more educated Indians as a practical demonstration of the moral superiority and ethical principles of Christ's teaching. They began to look for similar principles in Hinduism and there arose a school of Hindu reformers who were to change the course of ancient Hinduism profoundly, and undoubtedly for the better.

Raja Rammohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, (1772-1833) formed a lasting and deep friendship with Unitarian Christians in Britain, and he insisted on the worship of one God without the use of images. He set out to raise the status and education of Indian women and to emulate Christians in the performance of humanitarian service. He was one of the most active leaders of enlightened Hindu opinion in persuading the British Government in India to outlaw the cruel custom of *satee*. It was finally made illegal by Sir William Bentinck in 1829.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) took the Brahmo Samaj movement even further by introducing the ideas of repentance, prayer and emotional fervour in worship. He also advocated inter-class marriage and social equality for non-Brahmins. He did not, however, go all the way in according equal status to women. This was left to the more progressive elements in the Brahmo Samaj which has had a profound effect on the modern Hindu society. Justice Mahadev Govinda Ranade, who was deeply influenced by the Western Christian principles, encouraged social reforms, such as inter-caste marriage, remarriage of widows, inter-caste dining and the founding of several charitable institutions.

Hindu reform also took place *via* the movement to return to the purity of the Vedic scriptures, first under Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883). He approved the education of women, belief in one God without the use of images, and he deplored caste restrictions, child marriages, etc. Ramakrishna (1834-1886) and Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902) were great Hindu religious reformers who also were influenced by Christian ideals. They found many principles in common between Christianity and Hinduism. Indeed, one of the principles which the Ramakrishna Mission has in common with Sikhism is that all religions ultimately lead to the same goal and that God may be worshipped under many names. Like the Christians, the Ramakrishna Mission believed in the value of the religious discipline of performing philanthropic works.

In the general movement to popularize Hindu philosophy in the West, Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan has done a great deal with his numerous books in English. These have created a profound respect among European scholars and they have certainly influenced the Western search for a new philosophy.

The reform movements in Hinduism, which generally denounced caste restrictions and promoted the idea of universal brotherhood, are, it must

be remembered, post-Nanak and quite recent. They discouraged worship through images and, indeed, they are recognizing Guru Nanak's teachings by working hard to eliminate all the social evils of traditional Hindu society. The Hindu reformers have, consequently, gathered together from amongst their ancient scriptures much which is in harmony with the Christian principles of humanitarian service, love for mankind, and moral behaviour as a way towards salvation. In particular, a new interpretation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, through modern translations has provided a profound basis for the new Hindu philosophy.

It is a matter for regret that the earlier Sikh reformation was not sufficiently vigorous or universally enough publicized both to have greater impact upon Hinduism and to stamp out the ills of the Hindu society before the advent of the Christians. It was through the unification of India by the British and the fact of their being powerful rulers that they were able to effect the final eradication of such customs as *satee* and female infanticide and to draw attention to the evils of *purdah* and caste restrictions. The history of the Sikh struggle for survival, following the death of Guru Gobind Singh, however, was not conducive to the spiritual development or the spread of the Sikh religion and, consequently, the opportunity of being leaders in social reform was lost. Moreover, even today, with enlightened legislation by the Indian Government, the overwhelming tide of conservatism, superstition and ignorance in the Hindu society has not yet been completely turned back.

The new form of Hinduism which has become current among Indian intellectuals is, undoubtedly, much closer to Guru Nanak's Sikh reformation than the traditional Hinduism was. But even today, it is not possible to define what is Hinduism or who are its real adherents. Sikhism is a universal as well as a thoroughly tolerant religion; therefore it tends to overlook the finer distinctions in other theologies which would otherwise irritate the more firmly defined religions. But even in Sikhism, there are clearly defined principles which are entirely lacking or undesignated in, for example, Hinduism, and while the Sikhs would be right to retain an attitude of respect and tolerance for what is good in Hinduism, they would carefully avoid any syncretism of the two religions. Guru Nanak himself was quite firm on this point, as is evident from a study of his *Asa ki Var*.

Guru Gobind Singh's injunctions, the *Guru Granth* as the Sikh scripture, and the Sikh religious ceremonies all emphasize its differences from Hinduism or, indeed, from any other religion. The Sikh religion, consequently, stands firmly on its own ground as an independent religion to the same extent as other religions are so. It is fundamentally opposed to caste, not only because it believes in the equality of all mankind before God, but also because it thinks that every human being has the right to try and improve himself both materially and spiritually in this world. The Sikhs do not believe that sacrifices, pilgrimages, fasts or any kind of

ascetic practices are the prerequisites of, let alone an aid to, salvation. Sikhism teaches that God is not born on earth in any form, human or otherwise; so that no person, however holy, is in any sense Divine. God's spark dwells equally in all and He Himself is directly responsible for creation, not working through any other agency. The Sikh Gurus in their hymns reached the greatest spiritual heights of praise of, and devotion for, God, so that none could be said to surpass them in their mystical perception of the Divine. Yet in their lives, they were practical working men; ordinary, though enlightened human beings; and highly capable leaders and organizers. They set forth their own lives for their followers to emulate without having to be geniuses.

Today, partly because the Sikhs have migrated to all parts of the world, the teaching of Guru Nanak is gradually becoming known to and respected among other people. The world, in modern times, is no longer God-centred as it was in Europe before the Reformation or in India before about 1700. The prevailing philosophy is man-centred, and is likely to remain so. If religion of any kind is to survive, it must, besides pointing the way to God, orientate itself towards the welfare of man. It must be able to persuade modern man that his life has meaning, sense and direction and that in the cosmic universal design, God has assigned to man an important role to play. In this mission, Guru Nanak's teaching can make a significant contribution, because it is simple, forthright and direct. It is unhampered by the kind of dogmas which strain our credulity, offend our reason, or conflict with the discoveries of science.

People often ask what is there in Sikhism which is not found in other religions. The brief answer is, of course, 'Nothing.' But this is precisely wherein its unique merit lies. In creating a beautiful and coherent design, what the artist leaves out is infinitely more important than what he puts in. The poet must have a similar sense of discrimination by not elaborating too much on the details of his work. Guru Nanak's religion excluded all that was unnecessary for man's direct communion with God. Indeed, he maintained that many of the rituals, ceremonies and beliefs, in which people indulged, blocked and obscured the way to salvation. They had become ends in themselves, believed to render instant and easy access to merit, like the Pope's indulgences; while the only true way to God, that of love, was forgotten. Sikhism, in fact, has nothing that cannot be found somewhat buried under the accumulated ceremonial and dogma of other religions, but the fact that it excludes the excrescences is what makes it so unique.

Luther's Reformation discarded many of the extraneous details which had become part of Christianity, but it did not go as far as Guru Nanak's reformation in the East. The Sikh reformation has taken much longer to become established and recognized in the world; but it is, in fact, very much more far-reaching in its religious and social significance.

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XLVI

GURU NANAK AND THE PROBLEMS OF HIS AGE

A. C. BANERJEE

In the seventeenth century, the Sikh Gurus were dragged into politics by the unenlightened policies of the Mughal Emperors. The problem did not arise during the time of Guru Nanak and his three immediate successors. On the other hand, a visit by Akbar to Guru Amar Das at Goindwal was a friendly tribute to the Guru's saintly character. Moreover, by making a grant, in the name of the Guru's daughter Bibi Bhani, of several villages, the Emperor provided a nucleus for the establishment of the holy city of Amritsar. Such generosity could not, of course, be expected from the rulers of Delhi during Guru Nanak's lifetime. Sikandar Lodi was a persecutor of the Hindus. Firishta says that he "made a point of destroying all Hindu temples"¹ and, according to the *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, "he utterly destroyed diverse places of worship of the infidels, and left not a vestige remaining of them."² He put a Brahmin to death for the offence of saying that "the religions of both the Moslems and Hindus, if acted on with sincerity, were equally acceptable to God."³

Such was the inhospitable atmosphere in which the founder of Sikhism passed the first three decades of his life and experienced a sense of divine call. During the next two decades, covered for the most part by Sikandar Lodi's intolerant rule, he was a wanderer in different parts of India and outside this country, cut off from the intolerance of the Lodi regime.

Although Guru Nanak kept himself aloof from politics, he did not, at least in his mature years, ignore the political trends which affected the people's lives. Indeed, he was fully alive to the impact of political turmoil on society and religion. This was quite natural in view of the fact that he was not an ascetic in the traditional Indian sense. He lived the life of a householder, except during the two decades or so spent in travelling. At the end of that period, he did not establish an *asrama* in isolated hills to live a secluded life of meditation; he settled in the village of Kartarpur among the people and promoted by precept and example what has been called "disciplined worldliness."⁴

Bahlul Lodi and Sikandar Lodi succeeded to some extent in restoring the political prominence of the Sultanate of Delhi, which had begun to disintegrate towards the middle of the fourteenth century. Yet Delhi

under the Lodis was a provincial kingdom; it had completely lost the imperial majesty which it had enjoyed in the days of Ala-ud-Din Khalji and Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. The Lodis not only ruled over a much less extensive territory; they ruled over a State in which the institution of monarchy was far less exalted and the central power was much weaker. The foundations of the monarchy laid by Balban and Ala-ud-Din had been eroded by a century-long process of disintegration. Moreover, the Afghan loyalty to the principle of equality led logically to the devaluation of the monarchy. During the Lodi period, the Sultan, in relation to the over-mighty nobles, was a chief who was tolerated, but not a master who was obeyed; he was the *primus inter pares* raised to the *masnad* primarily to preside over racial monopoly of political power. Ibrahim Lodi's tactless protest against this system of racial oligarchy was among the prime causes of his downfall. Babar's invasion served as the external blow which was needed to accelerate the collapse of the inherently weak Lodi regime. The Mughal conqueror—harassed after Panipat by the continuing hostilities of the Afghans and the unforeseen challenge of the Rajputs—was not given time by Providence to organize and consolidate a new regime. After his premature death, the Mughal cause was weakened by quarrels among his sons and the Punjab passed into the hands of Kamran who had set himself up as a rival of Humayun.

During the first three decades of his life—the period before the travels—Guru Nanak lived at Talwandi and Sultanpur. The rulers of Delhi then were Bahlul Lodi (1415-89) and Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517). When he came back from his travels—probably in the twenties of the sixteenth century—the ruler was Ibrahim Lodi (1517-26). After Ibrahim's fall at Panipat, the Punjab became a part of the Mughal dominions. During the last eight years of the Guru's life, the province was actually ruled by Kamran.

The political uncertainties during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi and the early years of the Mughal regime had their repercussions on the life of the people, and, of these, Guru Nanak was not merely a casual witness. The only interval in the Guru's career, involving a direct contact with the machinery of the State, was his period of service at Sultanpur under Daulat Khan Lodi. This, however, had no political implication, for the official position occupied by the Guru was a modest one, and Daulat Khan Lodi had not yet attained the prominence which came to him after his appointment as Governor of Lahore which probably did not take place until A.D. 1500. The Guru's prophetic mission had not yet commenced; his mind was agitated by spiritual queries. The Guru's meeting with Babar had some political implications; but the authenticity of the incident is probably not beyond doubt.⁵

For direct evidence on the Guru's reaction to the political turmoil which he witnessed in the Punjab on his return from his travels, we must study his own compositions. The four well-known verses collectively

known as *Babar-Vani* (*Asa* 39, *Asa Astapadi* 11, *Asa Astapadi* 12 and *Tilang* 5) claim our attention. Doubts have been raised whether the Guru actually referred to the siege of Saidpur or of a bigger place like Lahore, and whether he really met Babar. A scrutiny of these factual questions is not relevant to our present purpose. There is no denying the fact that the Guru was present in or near those areas in the Punjab which were devastated by Babar's troops. Apart from the details given in the *Janamsakhis* which contain exaggerated accounts, though not entirely groundless, we have the Guru's own reaction, as expressed in his compositions. "There is in his descriptions of agony and destruction a vividness and a depth of feeling which can be explained only as expressions of a direct, personal experience."⁶ It was the experience of a warm-hearted human being whose eyes were fixed simultaneously on heaven and earth.

The cruel drama which the Guru saw enacted before his eyes was not—from his point of view—a political problem. Deeply moved though he was by oppression and suffering, he did not cry out like Guru Gobind Singh:⁷

The divine Guru sent me for religion's sake:
On this account I have come into the world—
'Extend the faith everywhere,
Seize and destroy the evil and the sinful.'
Understand this, ye holy men, in your souls
I assumed birth for the purpose
Of spreading the faith, saving the saints
And extirpating all tyrants.

Instead of claiming the role of a chastiser of "the sinful" and a protector of the innocent, Guru Nanak drew religious and moral conclusions from the terrible incidents which he saw around him. In the punishment of the Lodis, he saw the operation of the Divine Order (*Hukam*), the inescapable consequence of moral depravity and unrighteousness:

The wealth and sensual beauty which had intoxicated them became their enemies. To the messengers (of Death) the command was given to strip them of their honour and to carry them off. If it seems good to Thee, Thou givest glory, and if it pleases Thee, thou givest punishment. Had they paused to think in time, then would they have received the punishment? But the rulers paid no heed, passing their time instead in revelry, and now that Babar's authority has been established the princes starve.⁸

The dogs of Lodi have spoiled the priceless inheritance;
When they are dead no one will regard them.⁹

The following is obviously a reference to the Lodi rule:

The *Kali* age is a knife, kings are butchers;
Justice hath taken wing and fled.¹⁰

If anyone assumes an exalted name and indulges always in whatever his mind desires, he becomes as a worm in the sight of the Master, regardless of how much corn he pecks up.¹¹

The punishment of the wicked is readily understandable; it shows how divine justice seeks to maintain a moral order in the world. Associated with it, however, is the question of the suffering of the innocent. Most of those who fell in the fight between the Mughals and the Pathans did not share the wickedness of the Lodis. The women suffered along with men:

Hindu, Muslim, Bhatti, and Thakur women (suffered), some having their *burqas* torn from head to toe, others being slain.¹²

The Guru shared their pain:

When there was such slaughter and lamentation,
Didst not Thou, O God, feel pain?

It was, however, meaningless to complain:

The Creator acteth and causeth others to act;
To whom shall man complain?

The real explanation of the apparent contradiction in life was the principle:

Man obtaineth what is allotted to him.¹³

Here, it is possible to detect an implied reference to transmigration: each individual has an allotment of pleasures and sorrows on the basis of his performance in previous lives. "Him whom the Creator destroyeth, He first depriveth of virtue." But the Creator was prepared to save if the person concerned repeated His name:

Even if he be drowning in sin, God will still take care of him.
Nanak, the True One is beneficent to all.¹⁴

The ultimate explanation lay in the Creator's incomprehensible will:

Thou dost unite and thou dost divide;
Thus is Thy glory manifested.¹⁵

It was quite in consonance with Guru Nanak's moral and religious approach to the primary political issues of his last years—the collapse of the Lodi regime and the rise of the Mughal regime—that he did not consider their repercussions on his disciples in political terms. He did not think of prescribing the limits of political and spiritual powers as Guru Gobind Singh considered it necessary to do in later days. Speaking at

a time when he was suffering from the intolerant blows of the Mughal Empire, Guru Gobind Singh wrote in the *Bachitra Natak* :

The successors of both Baba Nanak and Babar
Were created by God Himself,
Recognize the former as a spiritual,
And the latter as a temporal king.¹⁶

For Guru Nanak, the question of such division of authority did not arise at all. He himself claimed to have been "commissioned" by "the one God," but he did not claim to be a "temporal king," capable of protecting his people. To "the one God," and to him only, man must look for support:

Everyone partaketh of His gifts,
He who looketh for human support,
Loseth both this world and the next,
There is but One Giver,
The whole world are beggars.
Kings and emperors are all made by him.
There is none equal to Him.¹⁷

II

In the Hindu society, caste and religion have been inseparable since time immemorial. That caste should be looked upon as a problem and that it was not a necessary and inescapable feature of social organization became clearer to some Hindu religious teachers of southern India as a result of the impact of Islam which demonstrated the possibility of a casteless society. Ramanuja barely touched the fringe of the problem. Ramananda tried to grapple with it and carried his ideas to north India where reformers like Kabir popularized them.

In studying Guru Nanak's attitude to the caste system, we cannot ignore the background created by the teachings of reformers like Ramananda and Kabir, nor can we overlook the influence of Islam which had been an active force in the socio-religious set-up in the Punjab for several centuries. Possibly, the teachings of Ramananda and Kabir had little direct effect on the development of his ideas, as we shall see later, but they had released forces of liberalism which must have penetrated into the Punjab. How far the Guru was actually influenced by Islam is a controversial issue. But there is no denying the fact that he was born in the Punjab and lived for about fifty years in that province which was among the earliest homes of Islam in India. The traditional stories of his association with faqirs in the Punjab cannot be entirely ignored, and he must have met many Muslim saints in course of his travels in India, even if he had not left the borders of the country. The existence of a

casteless society, side by side with a caste-ridden society, must have made a deep impression on his sensitive and receptive mind.

Much more important than external influence was his basic spiritual approach to the problems of human life. Guru Nanak was not a social reformer in the ordinary sense of the term. He did not aim directly and specifically at removing social injustice. His purpose was to lay down a path for men's spiritual journey. For entering that path, no social qualifications—no high rank in the social hierarchy—was needed; a craving for spiritual bliss was the only requirement; in pursuing that path it would be necessary for a man to drop his inherited social prejudices. Such a spiritual venture would in itself be a social revolution. And there could be no social revolution in India without considerable erosion, if not total elimination, of the caste system which crippled human dignity and inhibited spiritual regeneration.

From this point of view, it is easy to understand the well-known remarks of Bhai Gurdas (*Var* 1, 23): "Guru Nanak had reduced the four castes into one." If we take this statement in a literal sense, it would imply the formation of a casteless Sikh society, based on the removal of traditional restrictions, such as the prohibition of intermarriage and of inter-dining. There are difficulties in the way of accepting the proposition that such a society actually emerged in Guru Nanak's lifetime.¹⁸ If the four castes had really been reduced into one in the days of Guru Nanak, some of the reforms of Guru Gobind Singh would hardly have been necessary. He said, "Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another."¹⁹ It would appear that only they who received his baptism would be liberated from caste prejudices. Cunningham wrote that "Gobind abolished caste rather by implication than by a direct enactment." If Forster's statement is to be believed, the Tenth Guru's injunction ceased to be effective in the eighties of the eighteenth century. He wrote that "the Sikhs formed matrimonial connections only within their respective tribes."²⁰

Such difficulties would not arise, if we take the statement of Bhai Gurdas in a religious sense; by the reduction of four castes he meant, not the removal of the traditional classification or of the external social distinctions, but the elimination of caste as a factor in spiritual life. Ramanuja had reserved spiritual bliss for the first three castes: "Not for the Sudra is the grace of God available in this life. By dutiful conduct he may work his way up to another birth in which he may be admitted to the study of the Vedas which is indispensable for the saving knowledge."²¹ Guru Nanak recognized no such restriction based on birth. In his view, every man, irrespective of his position in the caste hierarchy, was eligible for salvation; those who took shelter in God were equals:

Perceive (in all men) the light (of God.) Do not ask (a man's) caste,
for in the hereafter there is no caste.

• • •

Caste and status are futile, for the One (Lord) watches over all.
 * * *

We who have taken shelter in God are neither high, low, nor in between. We are God's servants.
 * * *

(In God's presence) Dharamraj scrutinizes our record of good and evil, and in accordance with our deeds we dwell near Him or far off.²³
 * * *

No one calleth charified butter or milk impure;
 Such is a saint in regard to caste.²³

Behind these sayings lay the revolutionary principle that the worth of a man was to be judged solely by the intensity of his devotion for God; the Creator did not look upon caste as a test. Although the application of this principle was limited in the first instance to the world of religion, it could not but have powerful impact on society as a whole. The complete elimination of a system which was the very basis of the Hindu society was extremely difficult, if not impossible, but orthodoxy could hardly resist a breach in the citadel. Thus Guru Nanak did prepare the ground for a social revolution.

In this connection, a reference should be made to a characteristic Sikh institution, the *langar* or free kitchen. According to the generally accepted tradition, it was initiated by Guru Nanak and expanded by his immediate successors, Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das. The system represented two important points in Guru Nanak's teachings: the denunciation of asceticism and the importance of *dan*, the charitable sharing of money or goods. He said: "He who eats what he has earned by his own labour and gives some (to others)—Nanak, he it is who knows the true way."²⁴ Apart from the religious aspect, both these points strengthened the trends towards the development of a new social structure. What we call the dignity of labour was promoted and the individual's responsibility for contributing to social welfare was emphasized. Moreover, it was through the system of *dan* that the *langar* system developed. All those who came to take their food in the *langar* had to take it together, irrespective of caste or creed. It was a direct blow at the caste system. It was also a direct incentive to the promotion of fraternity and social solidarity. Here, we see how ideas propounded by Guru Nanak primarily from the spiritual point of view contributed to social reform.

One social evil, caused directly by the weakness of the Lodi regime and indirectly by the decay of religion, was the wide-spread practice of bribery:

Compassion is not exercised by merely beholding a suitor,
 There is no one who receiveth or giveth not bribes,
 * * *

The king dispenseth justice when his palm is filled.
 Greed and sin are ruler and village accountant;
 Falsehood is master of mint.²⁵

This was quite natural in an age when "Kings are butchers." We have the same picture in the *Var* (1:30) of Bhai Gurdas.

By drawing pointed attention to this evil practice, Guru Nanak showed how he shared the common man's feelings and grievances, for it is the common man whom this practice must have pressed very hard. He could suggest no direct remedy, but he tried to strike at the root of the evil by saying: "He who eats what he has earned by his own labour... he it is who knows the true way."

III

The keynote of the religious problems of Guru Nanak's age was most strikingly expressed in the famous pronouncement attributed to him in the *Puratan Janamsakhi*: "There is neither Hindu nor Musalman." According to Macauliffe, "the Sikhs interpret this to mean generally that both Hindus and Muhammadans had forgotten the precepts of their religions." This was the product, as Teja Singh says, of "the very peculiar turn of their mind, with which they would take those things as *ends* in themselves which were originally intended only as means." In other words, rituals supplanted religion.

Guru Nanak's condemnation of the traditional rituals was practically unqualified. He recognized that "some little honour" might be obtained through the performance of "pilgrimage, austerities, mercy, and alms-giving on general and special occasions," but the far better method of washing off impurity was to "hear, obey and love God." In general he prescribed God's name as "the best thing" in "this Kali age."²⁶

Blind and dumb (they, the Hindus, walk) in pitch darkness, worshipping this ridiculous stone which they have set up. It sinks, so how can it carry you across (the Ocean of Existence)?²⁷

On bathing at places of pilgrimage, the Guru said:

A sadhu possesses goodness even if he does not bathe, and a thief, even if he bathes, remains a thief.²⁸

On the futility of the ascetic practices, the Guru said:

He who sings songs about God without understanding them; who converts his house into a mosque in order to satisfy his hunger; who, being unemployed, has his ears pierced (so that he can beg as a yogi); who becomes a faqir and abandons his caste; who is called a *guru* or *pir* but who goes around begging—never fall at the feet of such a person.²⁹

To be a Musalman, the Guru said, was difficult :

Let one first love the religion of saints, and put aside pride and pelf
as the file removeth rust. Let him accept the religion of his pilots
and dismiss anxiety regarding death or life. Let him heartily obey
the will of God, worship the Creator and efface himself. When he
is kind to all men, then Nanak, shall he indeed be a Musalman.³⁰

To "abide pure amid the impurities of the world" was "to find the way
of religion :"

Religion consisteth not in a patched coat, or in a Jogi's staff, or in
ashes smeared over the body.

Religion consisteth not in carrings worn, or a shaven head, or in the
blowing of horns.

* • •

Religion consisteth not in wandering to tombs or places of cremation,
or sitting in attitudes of contemplation;

Religion consisteth not in wandering in foreign countries, or in
bathing at places of pilgrimage.³¹

The conventional conformity with rituals, which was the bane of the
religious life in Guru Nanak's age, was due primarily to the disappearance
of the fundamental idea of the unity of God. "Avatars and divinities,
prophets and saints, *pirs* and *dargahs* obscured the vision of men, dividing
them into irreconcilable and often actively hostile groups and destroying
the very bedrock of all true religious belief."³² The Guru attacked this
problem with a view to establishing the great truth: God is One (*Ek*)
and "there is no other."

The doctrine of *avatars* played a vital role in Vaishnava philosophy
which directed the *bhakti* of the devotees to Krishna, an *avatar* of God.
But in the case of Guru Nanak, *bhakti* was directed to God Himself
and there was no room in his system of thought for any manifestation of
God. His concept of God as *niranjan*, *achal*, *atit*, *alipt*, *niralep* and
ajuni, could not accommodate any *avatar*. He said:

Nanak, in comparison with the Fearless, Formless One, innumerable
Rams are as dust.³³

The question whether Guru Nanak recognized some Hindu divinities
is a controversial one; the answer depends upon a correct translation of
two passages in the *Japji*.³⁴ The controversy would, however, lose much
of its importance if we could place it in the context of the Guru's unmis-
takable and repeated emphasis on the unity of God. The Guru spoke of
"three approved disciples: one the creator of the world, one the sustainer,
and one who exercises the authority of death." These "three approved
disciples" apparently corresponded to the Hindu Trinity: Brahma, Visnu

and Siva. But the Guru did not recognize any difference among them on the basis of their functions. He said:

He who created also destroys, apart from him there is no other.
Having destroyed He builds, and having built he destroys.
Casting down he raises up and raising up he casts down.³⁵

Elsewhere, this was more explicitly stated:

He the One, is Himself Brahma, Visnu and Siva, and He Himself performs all.³⁶

The supremacy of the One True Lord was unequivocally stated:

Thou didst create Brahma, Visnu and Siva. . .³⁷

While referring to the One True Lord, the Guru did not hesitate to use different Hindu and Muslim names, such as Hari, Ram, Gopal, Allah, Khuda and Sahib; but he said:

My Master is the One, He is the One, brother, and he alone exists.³⁸

The Guru's statement on the Prophet of Islam falls in the same category as his views of Hindu *avatars* and divinities.

There are hundreds of thousands of Muhammads but only one God.
Many Muhammads stand in His court.
So numberless, they cannot be reckoned.
Prophets have been sent and come into the world.
Whenever He pleaseth He hath them arrested and brought before Him.³⁹

The purpose of the Guru was to bring man face to face with the Supreme Being: there was no room for intermediaries like *avatars* and prophets or even for scriptures like the Vedas and the Quran. The reading of the Vedas, he said, was "a secular occupation." Again: "God's secret is not to be found in the Vedas or the books of the Musalmans." The profit obtained from repeating the *Smritis* could be "obtained in one *ghari* by remembering the Name which conferreth greatness."⁴⁰

The greatest barrier between man and the Supreme Being was *maya*, not in the Vedantic sense of illusion (implying that the visible world was unreal), but in the special sense of delusion (implying that the visible world was real but impermanent). He who accepted the impermanent world as a source of pleasure and enjoyment was a victim of *maya* and had no entry to the Court of God. "*Maya* is that by which man forgets God, a false attachment is produced in him, and he begins to love something else in the place of God."⁴¹ Separated from God by *maya*, man had to pass through the painful process of transmigration. He must

choose between *maya* or darkness and untruth (*anjan* or black collyrium applied to eyes) on the one hand, and God (*nir-anjan*, One wholly apart from all that is dark and untrue), on the other. In the right choice lies his prospect of salvation:

The love of gold and silver, women and fragrant scents, horses,
couches, and dwellings, sweets and meats—these are all lusts of the
flesh. Where in the heart can there be room for Name?

* * *
Maya's disciple is false; he abhors the Truth.
Bound up in duality he transmigrates.⁴³

IV

Guru Nanak delivered a powerful challenge to traditional Hinduism, as actually practised in his days. He was, however, not a pioneer in this respect. His role as a religious teacher cannot be isolated from what may be called the "Medieval Reformation." This term connotes a general movement covering a period of several centuries and is composed of distinct strands of ideas and practices. What gave this movement a basic unity was the cult of *bhakti* or loving adoration of God.

The movement originated in southern India and was to some extent orthodox Hindu society's response to the challenge of Islam. On the west coast of India—in the Malabar region—Islam was in a flourishing condition in the ninth century. It is not altogether unlikely that Sankaracharya's Hindu revivalist movement directed against the decadent Buddhism was somehow connected with the appearance of an alien faith in his homeland. But a direct crusade against Islam was probably uncalled for in his lifetime; he might have hoped that the revival of Brahmanism and the elimination of its indigenous rival would curb the influence and restrain the zeal of the Muslim missionaries. If he really had any such hope it was not fulfilled. His philosophical approach did not bring Hinduism to the level of a popular religion, understood and appreciated by the masses to whom the simple democratic creed of Islam naturally made a powerful appeal. Muslim travellers visiting southern India in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries refer to the increasing number and influence of the followers of Islam. What the crisis confronting Hinduism called for was a simplified version of Hinduism, eliminating doctrinal intricacies and social injustices which had alienated the masses from their ancestral faith. The *bhakti* cult served this socio-religious purpose.

The first steps towards the development of this cult within the structure of Vaishnavism (built up earlier by the Alvars) were taken by Ramanuja who probably flourished in the eleventh century. He replaced Sankaracharya's doctrine of monism by the doctrine of dualism and declared that *bhakti* provided the royal road to salvation. On of the most remark-

able features of the new cult was that it paved the way for the liberalization of the society. The old privileges of the higher castes could not be completely abrogated, but the Sudras and the so-called untouchables received a recognized status within the fold of religion. Ramanuja made religious instruction available to them; they were allowed to attend certain temples on particular days in the year. Viewed in the context of the prevailing social rigidity, these were not negligible concessions.

Ramanuja, however, did not go far enough. It was Ramananda, a disciple of the Ramanuja school, who offered more generous recognition to the spirit of the age. He admitted to his sect disciples from all castes, even from among the Muslims, and called them "the liberated." As a systematic expounder and propagator of the *bhakti* cult he "deemed forms of adoration superfluous, and held that the supreme reward of devotion was to be obtained by incessantly uttering God's name."⁴³ The simplification of worship and the liberalization of the traditional caste rules were Ramananda's most important contributions to the solution of the religious problems of his day. He had a closer contact with Islam than Ramanuja. At Banaras, says Macauliffe, he came into contact with "learned Musalmans." The influence of Islam was probably not an unimportant factor in the development of his ideas.

Ramananda has been rightly described as "the bridge between the *bhakti* movement of the South and the North."⁴⁴ The traditional view is that in northern India his teaching found a great vehicle in Kabir who himself says that he was "awakened by Ramananda." It has also been suggested that "the echo of Kabir's teachings had reached even the land of the Five Rivers and that for many of his ideas Nanak was indebted to that great teacher."⁴⁵ There are chronological difficulties in the way of accepting these conjectural views. Whatever one might say about Kabir's debt to Ramananda, it is hardly possible to establish any positive link between Kabir and Guru Nanak. Two points, however, deserve consideration in this connection. First, Guru Nanak must have absorbed fresh ideas in the course of his travels in different parts of India; the world which he saw had advanced to some extent along the liberal teaching of Ramananda. Second, Ramananda and his followers, especially Kabir, certainly played a recognized role in the Sikh religious tradition. This is proved by the inclusion of their hymns in the *Guru Granth*. Only one hymn attributed to Ramananda has found its place in the Holy Book, but it has a typical affinity with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Among the non-Sikh *bhagats*, Kabir was given the place of honour in the *Guru Granth*; the English translation of his verses covers 175 pages of Macauliffe's last volume.

The number and variety of the non-Sikh *bhagats'* hymns incorporated in the *Guru Granth* show to what extent Sikhism was in fruitful contact with the Medieval Reformation in its different aspects. Whether that contact was established by Guru Nanak himself cannot perhaps be pre-

cisely determined, but it is hardly possible that his successors attached so much importance to the voice of the *bhagats*, purely on their own initiative, without guidance at least from oral traditions going back to the first Guru's days. The *bhagats* belonged almost to all communities, castes and regions. Their message had a cosmopolitan character. There was a general uniformity in their views on social and religious problems. As one goes through their verses, one feels one is not far off from the compositions of Guru Nanak. Even in medieval India, ideas were not static; they moved and created a new ferment wherever the atmosphere was congenial.

The story of the Kanphata or Nath sect of the yogis deserves separate mention, for it has no logical link with the Medieval Reformation. The practices of this sect were based on the ancient tradition of *tantric yoga* and had no similarity to the *bhakti* cult. The legendary founder of the sect was Gorakhnath. Some writers regard him as a historical figure who died between the ninth and twelfth centuries of the Christian era. According to one tradition, he was a king of Ujjain who abdicated his throne to become a yogi.

The well-known story that Guru Nanak ascended Mount Sumeru, and there held discourse with Gorakhnath and the other 83 Siddhas must be rejected; the Sikh Guru and the Nath teacher could not have been contemporaries. On the same ground must be rejected the story of Gorakhnath's visit to the Guru which provided the occasion for Lehna's readiness to eat the flesh of a corpse. These stories were introduced probably to illustrate Guru Nanak's contact with the Nath yogis to whom there are references in his own compositions. This sect appears to have been quite strong in the Punjab; it also had fallen a victim to that exaggerated dependence on rituals which was the bane of Hinduism in general. As was to be expected, the Guru told the yogis that a few external marks were but a poor substitute for the qualities which made a true yogi. "The path of true yoga," he said, "is found by dwelling in God while yet living in the midst of the world's temptations."⁴⁶

In spite of Guru Nanak's sharp criticism of the yogis, traces of their influence have been read in his teachings. Reference has particularly been made to the Guru's use of terms like *sahaj* and *anahad sabad*.⁴⁷ Two points deserve attention in this connection. First, it is not quite clear whether such words were used in exactly the same sense by the yogis and the Guru. The two words specially selected to emphasize affinity have a mystic content and it would hardly be proper to suppose that they bear a common connotation in all cases. Second, whatever their origin, such words gradually became the common property of different systems of religious thought. In such cases, the question of borrowing is more or less academic; in any case, the borrowing of words does not necessarily indicate the borrowing of basic ideas. On the

whole, the ideas of the yogis and the teachings of Guru Nanak are fundamentally different, and the Guru's attitude towards them must be regarded as critical rather than receptive.

V

It has been pointed out earlier that Guru Nanak emphasized the unity of God and sought to bring man face to face with Him. There were hurdles to be crossed before mystical union with God—the climax of spiritual progress—could be attained. *Maya* dragged man's attention to the impermanent world of attraction and temptation. "As iron is thrown into a furnace, melted and recast, so is he who fastens his affections on *maya* incarnated again and again." The *man*, a word with a complex connotation, imperfectly translated as "mind," was "unsteady" and did not "know the way." Then again, through the influence of *haumai* (pride, or ego, or self-centredness) man "transmigrates and wanders in doubt."⁴⁸

"How shall deliverance be obtained?"

To this crucial question, Guru Nanak had a simple answer. "For a diseased world, the remedy is the Name," said the Guru.⁴⁹ To this all-important word 'Name' different meanings were attached in different contexts. Sometimes it meant "God Himself," sometimes "God as revealed," and sometimes "the Word (*Shabda*)." No one could be imbued with a true love of the Name without instruction from the Guru: "None has realized God without the true Guru; without the true Guru, none."⁵⁰ Once again we have a word with a complex connotation. "The Guru is God; the Guru is the voice of God; and the Guru is the Word, the Truth of God."⁵¹ The influence of Karma was recognized so far as it determined a favourable or unfavourable birth; but the principal determining factor in man's quest for salvation was the divine grace (*nadar*): "It is through grace that the door of salvation is found."⁵²

One who condemned conventional rituals so unreservedly as Guru Nanak did could not be expected to prescribe complicated religious ceremonies for his followers. His emphasis was on *nam japana* or repetition of the Name, and *nam simaran* or remembering the Name. In neither case was it to be a mere mechanical process. There was to be no asceticism; one should eat what one had earned by his own labour and give some to others.⁵³ In this recommendation for "giving some to others," we have the origin of the practice of *dan*. Whether *isnan*, in the sense of bathing as a cleansing and purifying process, formed part of Guru Nanak's injunctions is not quite clear, although Bhai Gurdas seems to imply that *nam*, *dan* and *isnan* sum up the entire message delivered by Guru Nanak for the uplift of mankind.⁵⁴

Two important features of Guru Nanak's teachings distinguish them from those of other medieval reformers. First, they had the qualities of

precision and directness which were lacking in the mystical utterances of Kabir and others. Instead of releasing floating ideas which held the ordinary mind in a mystic grip but did not activate it, the Guru told the people what to aim at and how to proceed. This aspect of Guru Nanak's missionary work must be regarded as a primary factor in the development of Sikhism as a faith with a distinct individuality, providing a basis for a socio-religious organization (*panth*) with a personality of its own. Had the Guru's message lacked these qualities, it is more than probable that his followers would have survived as a very minor—almost unnoticed—sect like the Kabirpanthis, virtually submerged in Hinduism. The creed laid down by the Guru was simple; it was to some extent rigid (simplicity often implies some amount of rigidity), but it was elastic enough to provide a structure within which the Sikh community could grow for more than a century and a half till an entirely new environment called for the reforms introduced by Guru Gobind Singh. As history shows, the teachings of other medieval reformers did not provide any such opportunity for growth; they created sects which were swallowed up by Hinduism.

The second point to be noticed is the originality of Guru Nanak's teachings in at least two vital respects. His renunciation of asceticism was a significant breach with Indian religious tradition. Religion for householders had, of course, been distinguished from religion for sannyasis from time immemorial; but religious teachers always played the role of ascetics, guiding their followers from a distance. It was not recognized that the guru and the disciple could form an integrated community. Kabir anticipated the Sikh Guru, but his example did not consolidate itself into a tradition. Although Guru Nanak came into contact with many ascetics—Hindu and Muslim—during the two decades of his wandering life, he resumed his family ties when he settled down at Kartarpur, as we learn from Bhai Gurdas, and it is not unlikely that he even joined his followers in their daily labours in pursuance of his own precept on the need to earn one's own living. His preference for the householder's life was indicated also by his choice of Angad, a householder with a wife and children, as his successor in preference to his own elder son Sri Chand whose character was marked by otherworldliness. It was a revolutionary as also a decisive step. By barring the door to asceticism for the Gurus, he made Sikhism a householders' religion in a special sense. The Gurus lived the same life as their disciples did; they shared their joys and sorrows. The human side of their character gave a new tone and intensity to their spiritual leadership. It was an excellent way of promoting solidarity within the community.

A no less vital aspect of Guru Nanak's originality was the establishment of Guruship as a continuing institution. The concept of Guruship was very familiar in the Hindu religious tradition. A hierarchical chain of preceptors (*pir*, *shaikh*, *imam*, *qutb*) was known to Islam. But Guru Nanak

gave Guruship a new form and content. By nominating Angad as his successor, he established a precedent and initiated a tradition which moulded the Sikhs into an integrated community under uninterrupted spiritual leadership as nothing else could have done. In this revolutionary step, he was not anticipated or followed by any other medieval reformer. Trumpp rightly says that "the disciples of Nanak would no doubt have soon dispersed, and gradually disappeared, as well as the disciples of many other gurus before Nanak, if he had not taken care to appoint a successor before his death." It was the crucial starting-point of the separation of the Guru's disciples from the general body of the Hindus. Guru Nanak resembled other medieval reformers in revitalizing religion and morality, but he was alone in creating a distinct and self-conscious socio-religious community which was destined to play a fruitful and glorious role in his country's history.

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XLVII

THE SERMON AT SULTANPUR

TARAN SINGH

God, the Ineffable Reality, the *Parbrahm Parmeshwara*, commissioned Guru Nanak and installed him as *Guru Parmeshwara*. The *Janamsakhi* has preserved a mystic account of how the commissioning ceremony took place. The account is a literal truth and in its metaphorical sense it is no less true and inspiring. The incident must have happened round about A.D. 1499. Thus goes the account recorded in the *Janamsakhi*.

One fine morning, Sri (Guru) Nanak Dev, as usual, got into the rivulet Bein (which since centuries has been flowing near Sultanpur) for the daily bath. He from there was carried away straight to the court of the Lord by the messenger, detailed by the Lord Himself for the purpose. At the court, they announced the arrival of Sri (Guru) Nanak Dev. The Lord, the *Parbrahm Parmeshwara*, received him in His presence and offered him a cup of nectar, confiding that that was the Nectar of the Name. Sri (Guru) Nanak Dev accepted the cup, drank it and prostrated himself before the Lord. The Lord commissioned him as the Guru and commanded him to go back to the suffering humanity as its saviour with the assurance of the Supreme Lord that He would always be with him and His grace would be bestowed wherever Guru Nanak showered his grace. The Lord further said that henceforth He would be the *Parbrahm Parmeshwara*, whereas Nanak would be the *Guru Parmeshwara*. Guru Nanak was transported back to the world of the mortals.

In the Lord's court, the incident of commissioning might have lasted just a moment but that much time meant three days and three nights for mortals. In Sultanpur, it was given out that Nanak had been drowned, but the surprise remained a suspense because his dead body had not been traced, despite the best efforts made, as commanded by the Nawab of Sultanpur himself. Everybody was shocked but none could help. To the surprise of all, a very pleasant surprise, (Guru) Nanak emerged from the rivulet exactly at the spot from where he had vanished. The news of his reappearance spread and the people of Sultanpur came rushing to the bank of the Bein. The Nawab, escorted by officials and the Qazi, also came. None could explain Nanak's reappearance nor could he do so himself. But everyone could feel within that Nanak was a different

man, unlike any one of them. An aura was round his head and his face beamed out rays of a cool bright light. Right there, on the bank of the Bein, Guru Nanak addressed the people of Sultanpur, preaching his first regular sermon which was a New Testament, a new charter for man.

Before going to the actual pronouncement of the Guru and exploring its meanings, I need, in the light of the general pattern of the *Janamsakhi*, probe into the mystery of the installation of the Guru and his commissioning. This will also mean the study of the *Janamsakhi* from another angle.

II

Nanak got into the stream for a bath, vanished and reappeared as the Guru.

This is a mystery, but it is mysticism. All gospels have such elements. All hagiology contains narrations of such incidents. The commissioning of Moses, the Buddhas, the Christs (saviours), prophets and gurus has always been mystical, as such events have always been heralded by the burning of bushes, the delivery of tablets of commandments, the appearance of unusual light with inner enlightenment, transportation with transfiguration, transformation with ecstasy, etc. The portents and the events have always gone hand in hand. I believe that these events are historically true; they are mystic facts and they are also metaphorical realities. The tendency in modern man to brush aside these narrations as being of scant or no value is not wholesome and correct. Even if they are termed "miraculous," miracles have their recognized place in life which is being lived a little above the ordinary level of existence. If we reject them, we reject the entire hagiological literature too lightly, for this body of literature has visible and hidden value for man if it is properly understood according to its own pattern of thinking and tools of working, viz. the symbolic, allegorical and metaphorical expressions employed in them. The *Janamsakhi* literature does not exclude the same being interpreted as literature expressed in a set tradition of symbolism, allegory and metaphor.

I feel that right up to the first sermon by Guru Nanak, the *Janamsakhi* has been labouring only through symbology and allegory to portend this event and prepare the ground for the event of Nanak to be installed as the Guru. Such legends and events narrated by the *Janamsakhi*, as (i) the shade of the tree remains fixed on the sleeping Nanak; (ii) a white cobra spreading out its hood to protect Nanak against the scorching heat of the sun; (iii) a field grazed by (Guru) Nanak's cattle appears lush as natural, etc., portend the event of the bath in the Bein and establish him as the future Guru and interpret the status and mission of guruship. They are very simple and unsophisticated stories but for that very reason very significant. Their simplicity does not exclude depth, rather it

includes it all the more, because they are set in the mystic tradition, pattern and logic of the country and the category of literature to which the *Janamsakhi* belongs.

(i) In the *Guru Granth* itself, God has been compared to a tree whose branches are the creation (*Tu paid shakh teri phuli-Majh*, Guru Arjan). When in the *Janamsakhi*, the shade of the tree remains constant on the body of the sleeping (Guru) Nanak, its significance is clear—it means the same thing as God Himself tells Nanak when he is commissioned, viz. God will always be with Nanak, or (Guru) Nanak will always be under the protection of God. Guru Nanak was commissioned to bring the whole of humanity under the shade of that tree, viz. God, so that the cool and peace may dawn on man. (ii) The snake has a long tradition in Indian symbology as the Anant Nag, as Shiva's companion, and as the guardian or custodian of fertility, music and wealth. Guru Nanak has enchanted the snake, because he is the treasure of music, poetry and wealth himself; he is Vishnu who sleeps on the bed of Anant Nag or life-force; he is commissioned to suck the poison of evil from society and still remain immune; the guru's *mantra* is the killer of poison of which the snake is a symbol. (iii) The cattle of *indryis* (senses) graze the spiritual field of man and impoverish him spiritually. The look of the guru restored man to his spiritual glory again.

Thus such "improbable" stories have their deep purpose, when interpreted in the tradition of symbology of the country. They portend the coming event, the stories, as such, did succeed as (Guru) Nanak began to be regarded, quite in his childhood, as an incarnation or, at least, a man of God in a highly specified form.

Guru Nanak got into the stream for a bath which symbolizes purity, freshness, rejuvenation, and new strength to work. The Guru bathed and then bathed humanity in the stream of his *bani* that ever since flowed from his lips. Man bathed in the stream of his *bani* and awoke to realize his true destiny.

III

To come back to the subject, Guru Nanak, invested with full authority, preached his first sermon at Sultanpur nearly five centuries ago. Perhaps, this sermon was the briefest ever in the history of prophets and gurus. Guru Nanak revealed to humanity whatever he had experienced in the presence of the Lord. The sermon had three parts:

(1) The first part of the sermon did the much-needed scrapping of all divisions of man on the bases of religions, castes, creeds, cultures, countries, etc. Guru Nanak scrapped all divisions of mankind with one pithy utterance—"No Hindu, no Musalman." He proclaimed the oneness of all peoples, religions and cultures. This gave a new status to man as man and took away all rights of certain men, such as Brahmins

or Kashtriyas. The proclamation was a new charter of emancipation for man, set against himself. This utterance implied the unity of mankind and also that by birth all are equal as men. Mankind is indivisible.

In a narrow circumstantial sense, the utterance could be taken to mean that humanity had touched the lowest ebb as none was really religious or human. But in that connotation even, the real implication would be that there is only one religion and that is the religion of man as man. Humanity is the real religion. Nomenclatures, labels and badges are immaterial.

Guru Nanak, while addressing the Hindus or the Musalmans, stressed the level of living and not the labels or garbs. He would wish a Hindu to wear the sacramental thread of mercy, contentment, self-control and truth. He wanted the Musalman to say the five prayers of truthfulness, right earning, well-wishing for humanity, right intention and praises of the Lord. These values stress that the real religion for all mankind is one.

This proclamation also implied that Guru Nanak had come neither for the Hindus alone nor for the Musalmans alone; rather, he had come for mankind. He was saying that for him the barriers of Hinduism and Islam did not stand. He would deliver the message to mankind and not to a section or sections of humanity.

(2) The second part of the utterance in the sermon at Sultanpur was this:

Ik Onkar Satnam Karta Purkh Nirbhau Nirvair Akal Murti Ajuni Saibhang Gurprasad.

This is a revelation, it is neither prose nor poetry, it is the language of God. This verse has ever since been called the *Mul-Mantra* or the "Basic Doctrine."

In this part of the sermon, having proclaimed the unity of mankind, Guru Nanak proceeded to lay the ideal for mankind or the *summum bonum* of life, the highest values or principles for the realization of which mankind should strive. The oneness of humanity depends upon the oneness of its ideal. Only certain universally acceptable principles could keep mankind united.

The *Mul Mantra* proclaims that God or Truth has seven facets and the realization of truth or worship of God requires the realization or the inculcation of the sevenfold ideal in human living. These seven principles of the *Mul-Mantra* constitute the universal religion. They are as under:

(a) The first facet of God or Truth is the *Ik Onkar* or the Unity in which all oppositions, polarities and contradictions of matter and spirit, good and evil, eternal and temporal, dimensions of time and space are resolved—they do not exist. The supreme reality is the unity of life and it is the source of all life and creation. God is one and worship of God lies in accepting the unity of life, oneness of mankind. Realization of God raises man above all contradictions of matter and spirit, clashes

of *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*, claims of castes, creeds and cultures. All creation has come out of the One, it lives and has its being in the One and ultimately merges into the One. This is Guru Nanak's metaphysics.

(b) *Satnam* is the second aspect of the Supreme Reality. God is truth and whatever expression (*nam*), He pleases to give Himself is true. The creation is a form or an aspect of Truth and thus life has to be accepted as a truth. The truth of life is realized by truthful living or expression of human life. The truth is inherent in man and it is to be realized in thought, word and deed. This truthful living is the true worship of God. The principle of truthful living can alone help realize the destiny of mankind.

That is Guru Nanak's concept of the physical life of the universe.

(c) *Karta Purkh* is the third aspect of the Supreme Reality or God. God is a conscious creator. Creativeness or creative activity is godliness. Thus worship of God lies in being creative in thought, word and deed. Activity which promotes the interests of the self and humanity is creative. Human interests are spiritual, religious, cultural, social, political, etc. Man should be constructive in all activities. One needs to be sensitive and conscious in order to be constructive in approach to life. A constructive approach to life is a precondition to God-realization. Constructive thinking, approach and working are godliness.

This is the doctrine of human individuality.

(d) God is *nirbhau* and *nirvair*—that is the fourth aspect of the Truth. God is without fear and animosity. Human life should be without fear and animosity in order to realize Truth. Religion or worship is the mode of living which makes man fearless. This is possible only if the three principles already enunciated form the basis of human life, viz. oneness of mankind, truthful and constructive living. No man should frighten others, or be frightened by them. This principle aims at creating a society where fear does not exist and that is possible only if conflicts, clashes, oppositions do not exist there. Worship of God is, therefore, a social contract among peoples not to be overawed by others or to overawe them; this is peaceful co-existence!

This is the social doctrine of Guru Nanak.

(e) The fifth principle of the sermon at Sultanpur is the principle of *Akal Murti* or worship of the Eternal Beauty. God is a timeless beauty. God is the beauty which finds best expression in beautiful thoughts, words and deeds. Worship of God means the worship of the beauty of living or character; it is the beauty of personality. Man must cultivate beauty which must dominate all human activity.

This is the principle of human aesthetic sense or culture.

(f) The sixth fundamental in the sermon is that the Truth is *Ajuni Saibhang*, that is, it is never a deduction from any preconditions or dependent upon any other conditions. The truth is not born of anything else; it is its own expression; it shines by itself. Truth is never subject

to considerations—communal, political, social or religious. Truth has to be the first consideration of man without caring what consequences could flow from it. Truth is independent; truthfulness shall make man free and freedom is a virtue concomitant with truth. The freedom of man is the concern of God. A religious man is a free man.

This is Guru Nanak's doctrine of spiritual freedom expressed in political and social freedoms of man.

(g) The seventh doctrine preached in the first sermon of Guru Nanak was the doctrine of *Gurparsad*. It denotes that all the foregoing six principles could be lived only if man is enlightened. The Guru is the symbol of light or knowledge which is accompanied by sweetness or *parsad*. God is realized by the grace of the Guru. Truth is realized by light and sweetness. Light and sweetness in human patterns of living are called culture. Religion is the ground of human culture; it cultivates the human personality. The light implied is the light of truth, and sweetness is the sweetness of tolerance, politeness, consideration, compassion, sympathy and love. The realization of God means the inculcation of these virtues.

This is Guru Nanak's doctrine of culture.

Thus in the sermon, Guru Nanak defined God as the Truth and His worship as truthfulness, a creative and constructive approach to life, fearless living, love of beauty in life, freedom and enlightenment. Such a society is a religious one.

The *Janamsakhi* further records that while in the presence of God, Guru Nanak received also the *Japji*, the basic scriptural text (*bani*) of Sikhism. The *Japji* gushed out from Guru Nanak. The text depicts the spiritual journey of a pilgrim to the *Sodar*, the House of the Lord, and his entry into it. The *Sodar* has been depicted as the 'House of Harmony' where air, water, fire, *devas*, *siddhas*, *jogis*, *jatis*, *satis*, *Brahma*, *Visnu*, *Siva*, *pandits*, *tirthas*, warriors, etc., sing the praises of the Lord, that is, all these powers and forces act in harmony with the Lord's will. The *Sodar*, besides, gives the following tenets:

(i) He alone is Truth Eternal; He abides in and controls the universe with his Will.

(ii) His creation is also true, but it takes form according to the Lord's Will and again merges into Him.

(iii) The creative power of the Lord, called *maya* works up the universe of varied forms and colours.

(iv) The Lord takes care of His own creation as He loves it, and as it loves His greatness.

(v) None can interfere in the Lord's Will, and its working. His Will establishes the order in the universe.

(vi) He alone is the Supreme Lord and the good of mankind lies in submitting to His Will. Self-surrender to Him is the path of spiritual attainment.

The Guru sang the *Sodar* in the sermon at Sultanpur. The *Sodar* is the central *pauri* of the *Japji* which lays down also the path of the self-surrender to the Lord's Will, but leaves to man himself to choose that path or not. The discipline of self-surrender has the following steps:

- (i) To follow the Order as ordained by His Will.
- (ii) To sacrifice one's ego in favour of submission to His Will.
- (iii) To contemplate the greatness of the Lord and meditate upon His expression in all names and forms.

- (iv) To look to Him as the creator and sustainer of life.

- (v) To banish all sinful activity in the self by devotion for the Lord.

- (vi) To imbibe all virtues in order to be a devotee.

(3) The third part of the sermon at Sultanpur was a short drama, enacted by the Guru in the mosque of Sultanpur to drive home the lesson that true worship was a matter of the heart and not of formal ritualism. It all happened like this:

The Guru's pronouncement that there was "no Hindu and no Musalman" was challenged by the Qazi of Sultanpur. He took strong exception to such a pronouncement in a Muslim regime. The Qazi invited Guru Nanak to come to the Masjid and say the *nimaz*. The Nawab nodded to it, though he being a nobler man and not a fanatic was not perturbed by the pronouncement. The Guru went for the *nimaz*. The Qazi and the Nawab offered the *nimaz* with all the rituals, but the Guru remained only standing. This further enraged the Qazi as it was a sacrilege. But the Guru hushed up the Qazi by telling him that when he was formally offering the *nimaz*, his heart was taking care of the foal his mare had delivered that morning. The Nawab, too, was told to have been wandering in Kabul after the horses being purchased there by his men.

The sermon at Sultanpur over, Guru Nanak was clear about the message he had come to deliver. He wasted no time, and right from the bank of the Bein, he set out on his missionary tours in the four directions. The world was "burning" and he had been sent to put out the "fire." The Bein of Guru Nanak's message flows on and on.

XLVIII

THE PERSPECTIVE OF GURU NANAK

S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

For one, who is cut off by linguistic barriers from the authentic utterance of Guru Nanak and can lay claim to only a meagre study of the admittedly imperfect translations, to attempt a consideration of his teachings would be inexcusable. But I plead that the performance may be counted as an act of devotion, and homage and no pretentious claim to adequate exposition and appraisal be made. In this brief paper, an attempt has been made to define the perspective of Guru Nanak and to set in relief his cardinal principles.

Guru Nanak tackled the ethical problems of life in a singularly fruitful way. He justly rejected the earth-bound utilitarianism of the sensate man and also steered clear of the life-negating pathway of extreme asceticism. A healthy participation in the work of individual and social life was held up as the ideal. The ritualistic framework of current Hinduism was abandoned and the conventional social code governed by caste was rejected with vehemence. The picture of moral life that emerges from these clarifications is one of activity elevated and zealous for the promotion of individual perfection and social advancement. One might almost say that the ethics of Guru Nanak is a translation of the Karma-Yoga of the *Gita* into a workable system of practical morality.

Guru Nanak was not a victim of any narrow conception of religion. He freely appropriated the inspiring elements of both Hinduism and Islam. Within Hinduism itself, the warring creeds and sectarian cults prevailing in his time did not impress him in their exclusiveness. He concentrated his God-ward attention on the basic verities embodied in all the religious traditions and distilled out of them the universal quintessence. An intensely religious consciousness utterly emancipated from the separatist outlook of the various historical religious traditions is a phenomenon altogether rare in the history of cultures. Guru Nanak achieved this intensity and universalism with outstanding success.

In the cultural history of our country, religion and philosophy never formed two independent factors. All religions contain a metaphysical core and all philosophical systems promulgate ways of attaining the ultimate good. Naturally, therefore, the religious perspective of Guru Nanak

was affected by philosophical currents. There have been two trends in philosophical writings from time immemorial in our country. We have, in first place, exegetical treatises interpreting the inherited sacred texts, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Gita* and the Brahma Sutras. It does not appear that Guru Nanak allowed this type of discussion to enter into the structure of his message. On the other hand, we have extensive treatises on metaphysical and epistemological disputes carrying on subtle polemics, as illustrated in the works of Buddhistic and Nyaya authors. Even this dialectical phase of philosophical literature seems to have made very little impact on Guru Nanak. What we find is that he took over from philosophy the broad conception of Vedanta, such as the doctrines of the *atman* and *karma* and the ultimate concept of *Brahman*, the Supreme Reality. The fundamental doctrinal affirmations of Vedanta freed from the scholastic and dialectical setting enter into the central stream of Guru Nanak's thoughts. The elaborate scaffolding erected by the Vedantins for advancing their basic tenets is gently ignored and the final tenets themselves go to constitute the philosophical substance of Guru Nanak's teachings.

There is no doubt whatever that the Ultimate Reality for Guru Nanak is *Brahman*, as in Vedanta. That principle has been represented in the course of Vedanta in two alternative formulations. According to one, it is an impersonal spiritual principle and it constitutes the whole of reality. The world of nature and the finite individual are just appearances falsely superposed on it owing to the inscrutable power of *maya*. According to the other, *Brahman* is concrete, the supreme divine personality, and the world and man are His authentic aspects contained in the all-encompassing expanse of His being. The goal of life for both formulations consists in the attainment of union with the Infinite Divine. It appears to me that the general direction of Guru Nanak's thought inclines towards the personalistic concept of the god-head. God, no doubt, transcends the cosmos, but He also permeates it as its indwelling spirit. The cosmos is no phenomenal misconception, but constitutes a real dimension of His created self-manifestation. The idea of God as the living breath of the finite manifold divinizes the world without attenuating His transcendent majesty. Such a concept of God is the bedrock of all the inspiration of Guru Nanak. That such is the basic vision of the Guru is amply confirmed by the unmistakably devotional approach to the Deity promulgated by him.

The other view of the godhead does require and promote a contemplative type of mysticism. The mystic apprehension of God advocated by Guru Nanak is conceived and described in terms of *bhakti* and self-surrender, of intense longing and ardent prayer. Fullness of life is sought here through utter dedication to the Supreme. Hence the ninefold *bhakti* of the *Bhagavatam* is incorporated in the scheme of *sadhana*.

This broad vision of reality is made to deliver practical direction to the struggling humanity and Guru Nanak lays down three imperatives as of paramount importance, the *Guru*, the *Satnam* and the Divine *grace*. The

first imperative is the submission to the Guru who illuminates the soul with the wisdom concerning God. In no other religion is the Guru exalted higher than in the religion of Guru Nanak. The Guru has to be in attunement with God and through such a Guru God's own truth communicates itself to us. The importance of the concept of the Guru is indicated by the very name of the community of the followers of Guru Nanak, which calls itself the Sikh meaning *shishya*. It is brotherhood of disciples, faithfully adhering to the guidance of the Guru. What the Guru teaches in ultimate analysis is the name of God, the *Satnam*, the veritable descent of God to man. We may also characterize the followers of Guru Nanak as yearning for the *Nam*, as living by the *Nam* and as seeing in it the infinite spiritual treasures. No other tradition of religion, I may venture to say, glorifies God's Name as much as the tradition of Guru Nanak. The best of the names of God is *Sat* or Truth, and God is Himself definable as one whose name is Truth. That Truth, at its highest, is the name of God and is a maxim of inexhaustible significance. When the disciple is established in *Satnam*, he gains from it true life and infinite rapture, and he becomes the recipient of the final grace of God. Grace is the last word in spiritual life. In reality, grace functions all through the spiritual evolution of the individual. It is said, "By the grace of the Lord, individual meets the Guru and after being absorbed in the name of the Lord by the grace of the Guru, the individual attains *nirvana* by the grace of the Lord." Man's redemption is solely through the grace of God, his sole preparation for receiving the redemptive grace is his complete devotion to the name. The name is obtained by the grace of the Guru and the Guru is found through the initial grace of God. This omnipresent potency of Divine grace and its final efficacy in redeeming man are the fitting themes for concluding one's homage to the great *Satguru*, Nanak. May his illuminating grace lead us towards the *Satnam*.

The word of the Guru is the inner music.
 The word of the Guru is the highest Scripture.
 The word of the Guru is all-pervading.
 The Guru is the Mother Goddess.

* * *

Those who have inner faith in the Name,
 Always achieve their own liberation,
 Their kith and kin are also saved. . .
 Saith Nanak, the saints are always happy:
 By hearkening to the Name
 Sorrow and sin are destroyed.

* * *

I am poor and wrecked,
But I am Thine, O Lord:
Save me, O save me,
Thou greatest of the great.
Thy Name, to thy slave Nanak
Is as his staff and his shield.
Only in the name of the Lord
I have found my comfort.

* * *

O God, Searcher of hearts,
O God, Thou who dispensest to each of us
The fruits of our acts,
Fulfil one wish of my heart:
Nanak, Thy slave, craveth
The boon that he may be made
The dust that clings to the soles
O Lord, of the saints.

XLIX

GURU NANAK'S COMMENT ON THE VAISHNAVA LILA

NORVIN HEIN

The generous call to attend this conference and to give a paper on Guru Nanak was also a call to repentance in my case. I have always been aware of the vigour and significance of the Sikh religion, but my professional attention has been focussed entirely on the Vaishnava tradition. Only once in my life, my studies in Indian literature have brought me into direct contact with the thought of Guru Nanak and compelled me to search for the true meaning of one of his original writings. So I have been obliged to prepare my speech for this occasion with no real choice of topic: I *must* present what I have learnt from a study of the first half-dozen *slokas* of the Guru's great hymn, the *Asa ki Var*.

In view of the fact that I understand the original language of the Guru only marginally, and that I have had no advanced training in the Sikh doctrine (the elemental facilities for the study of Sikhism hardly exist in my country), everything that I say will surely need the correction of the learned men. I shall consider their instruction a privilege.

It was while searching for information on the history of the modern Vaishnava dramas called the Raslila and the Ramlila that I had the good fortune to lay my hands for the first time on the *Asa ki Var*, first in the English translation of Macauliffe, and later in a rare Devanagari edition of the text that contained a valuable Hindi commentary by Bhai Saheb Mahtab Singh.¹ In this paper, I shall usually be citing and quoting Macauliffe's translation, with occasional preference to the language of Mahtab Singh's text. But the one long passage that I shall introduce has been retranslated in order to include illuminating insights into the text provided by Mahtab Singh's *Tika*.

While studying the *Asa ki Var* again in preparation for the seminar, I have lost entirely any apologetic feeling I may have had to the effect that I am not offering you very much. The more I have pondered its lines, the more lucid and powerful its message has become. Its contents turn out to be important for two sets of enquiries. At the heart of the hymn stands a series of verses that describe the activities of certain troupes of Vaishnava actors. For those who are interested in the history of the Indian theatre, they provide unique information about a transitional time

in the development of Vaishnava religious dramas. The rest of the hymn is a broad framework of critical comment on these descriptive verses, in which Guru Nanak comments on the theological ideas of the Vaishnava actors. For those who are trying to understand the distinctive character of early Sikhism, Guru Nanak's discussion reveals one of the major differences that distinguished his religion from the closely related Vaishnava movements of the time.

We shall lay forth first the hymn's valuable contribution to our knowledge of the history of Indian drama, and to do so we shall present the lines that provide our information on this subject:

Nanak, the Formless One is without fear;
 all the Rams are dust.
 How many Krishna-tales there are,
 how many views of the Vedas!
 How many beggars dance, and, twisting and turning,
 beat time with their hands!
 The mercenary fellows go into the marketplace
 and draw out the market crowd.
 As kings and queens, they sing
 and utter fantastic stuff,
 Wearing rings and necklaces
 worth hundreds of thousands,
 The body that wears them, O Nanak,
 will become ashes. . .
 The disciples play instruments, the gurus dance,
 shake their feet, roll their heads;
 The dust keeps flying and falls on their hair,
 and the people, seeing it, laugh and go home.
 It is for the sake of bread that they beat time
 and purposely fall on the ground,
 That the Gopis and the Krishnas sing,
 that the Sitas and royal Ramas sing.³

It is evident that these dramas were not theoretical types described in scholars' books but social facts of Nanak's world. If they had not been real dramas, and influential ones at that, Guru Nanak would not have reacted to them so strongly nor commented on them so fully nor been so concerned that his followers see them in the proper light. Tradition says that Guru Nanak encountered these players in Vrindaban, when, in the course of his tours, his wanderings took him to that great centre of Vaishnava drama. In that case, he must have seen their performance sometime between 1500 and 1520, the probable limits of Guru Nanak's period of travel.³ At any rate, they were seen before 1539, the latest dating of the Guru's death.

The lines we have quoted mention the enactment of the stories of both the great Vaishnava *avatars*, Rama and Krishna. The importance of the historical information that the lines contain will not be appreciated by many without a summary of what is known from other sources about

the history of Ramlila and Raslila, the modern northern Indian stage traditions that enact the stories of these two deities.

In the case of the Ramlila, there is a strong and credible Vaishnava tradition that traces its origin back to about 1623, the year of the death of Tulsidas. A faithful disciple of Tulsi, named Megha Bhagat, in loyalty to his departed master, is said to have put his charming new Ramayana to use on the stage for the first time in a series of performances that he directed at Nati Imli in Banaras. The story probably has value. However, a passage in the *Ramcaritmanas* itself shows that Megha Bhagat's innovations did not mark the beginning of the Ramlila style of drama. Fifty years before, when Tulsi was writing his Ramayana he referred already to amateur Ramayana dramas in which Brahman children enacted serially the entire cycle of the stories of Rama.⁴

But with that reference that cannot be dated before 1584, all trace in Vaishnava writings of the Ramlila of northern India comes to an end. We do not know what type of Ramayana drama, if any, prevailed before these direct and simple children's performances that were known to Tulsidas.

It can be proved that ancient and medieval India knew performances on Ramayana themes in the style of *Bharata-Natyam*, executed by adult dancers who were assisted by a singing chorus. The evidence will be published elsewhere soon.⁵ We pick up reference to these Ramaite dance-dramas in a document as late as a Jain commentary of A.D. 1236 that will be quoted a little later. But the 450 years between that date and the completion of Tulsi's Ramayana are a blank. We do not know whether the dance-drama survived in northern India into the sixteenth century, or whether, if it did, it was connected in any way with the rise of the Ramlila.

When we enquire into the history of the Raslila, which dramatizes the stories of Krishna, the trail ends in the same sort of gap. The *rasdharis* of the Nimbarka and of the Gauriya *sampradayas* have each preserved their own separate historical tradition about the beginnings of the Raslila. Modern Nimbarkite writers name as the founder of the art a certain Ghamandi who worked under the guidance of Swami Haridas, probably between 1540 and 1560 or at the latest 1570. The Gauriya *sampradaya* claims the same distinction for Narayan Bhatt. Narayan Bhatt was living in Braj in 1553 and again in 1569, and it was certainly he who laid out the Brajatra pilgrimage trail and initiated the acting of Krishna's *lilas* on the spots on that route where they were believed to have occurred originally.

When the earliest literary references to these alleged founders are examined by themselves, one finds that they do not actually claim that either of them devised an entirely new style of theatrical performance. An earlier type of mystery play is not ruled out by these traditions. But neither tradition mentions any earlier form of drama or has anything to

say about any forms of Krishnaite drama that were known in northern India before 1540.

Again, I have found substantial evidence, too massive to be introduced here, that Vaishnava dance-dramas were a living art in Mathura even 2000 years ago. They were presented by highly trained mature performers, using the intricate mute symbols of the classical dance. In other parts of India, at least, this Krishnaite dance-drama survived into the sixteenth century and even beyond, but for the North Indian heartlands its survival has not been proved. As in the case of the Ramlila, no connection has been traced between the modern children's dramas with their direct mimicry and their vernacular dialogue, and the ancient dance-drama in which singers sang the sacred text and professional dancers rendered the story into *abhinaya* and the soundless words of the *mudras*.

At this point of our helplessness, Guru Nanak's observations come to our aid. They assure us that Vaishnava religious drama did indeed exist before 1540 and before any of the "founders" remembered by the modern *bhaktas* had done any of their creative innovations.

Let us study the nature of those early sixteenth-century Vaishnava plays that were in existence when the Vaishnava renaissance had hardly begun. An examination of Guru Nanak's choice of descriptive words tells us at once that the performances he had seen were still, essentially, dance-dramas. The verbs in the text that refer to the physical movements of the actors are forms of the verb *nacna*, "to dance," or they are action words referring to motions that are a part of dancing. The literal kind of acting that prevails in the Ramlila and even in the Raslila is marginal here or not present at all. The dancing occupies the centre of attention here; it is regarded as the important thing; it is the task reserved for the important people: *vaini cele nacani gur*, "the disciples play (instruments), the gurus dance." The gurus dance and leave the instrumental accompaniment to the underlings. This is unlike the situation in the modern *lilas*, where the pandits and the *swamis* and other revered elders sit in the musicians' row and direct the action from the sidelines.

Though Guru Nanak's plays are dance-dramas, they are far from the perfections of the ancient art. No word of Guru Nanak suggests that the delicate *hastas* and *abhinaya* are any more being used by them. Guru Nanak uses the verb *gana*, "to sing," in describing how these actors present their story: "... *gavahi raje rania bolahi al patal... gavani gopia gavani kan, gavani sita raje ram*." The sung word has magnified its importance on this stage, and the dancing is crude and minimally communicative. Guru Nanak mentions how the dancers control their bodies, shake their feet, roll their heads, beat time with their hands, and roll in the dust in pretended swoons. They have lost control of the ancient dance-language. Dance survives with them only in the humble role of intensifier of the emotion of *bhakti*.

These dramas are in discernible contact with the Vaishnava *lilas* of the

end of the sixteenth century. They share the same region as their locale, they are close in time to the known later dramas, they are rooted in the same Vaishnava religious movement, they speak the language of the people, their appeal is to the millions and their religion is the *bhakti* religion. Another tie between the dramas may be the doctrine of *svarupa*. Guru Nanak, as his comments will show, seems to be reacting to a notion that these actors are a kind of temporary *avatara* of the gods they represent, and that one who beholds them in their glorious crowns and jewels receives through them a *darsana* relationship with the Deity Himself.

If Guru Nanak really describes the missing link between an ancient and a modern art, how shall we explain the pathetic difference between these miserable performances and the polished ancient ones? They are an acting tradition that has fallen upon hard times. The performers are no longer the ornaments of royal courts, nor the darlings of cultured and aristocratic audiences. Guru Nanak calls them beggars or *mangate*. They have to invite themselves into the marketplaces and scratch for a living in the bazaars. They earn their daily bread by amusing the frivolous mob. In Guru Nanak's opinion, they sell even their religious sincerity for survival.

I believe we have a picture here of a great old stage tradition in the nadir of its defeat. The ancient dance-drama required for its success a deeply cultured audience well-educated in the recognition of the symbols of the dance. It required long training in its actors and wealth and generosity in its patrons. Here we see it after five hundred years of the erosion of the essentials of its life. During these centuries of foreign rule the ancient Hindu cultural tradition has become less fashionable and less profitable, those willing to be patrons have dwindled in numbers and in wealth. Few North Indians, at the dawn of the sixteenth century, could appreciate and support the complicated old dance. And here we have the successors of the old dance-masters of the North in their final degradation, barely able to make a living even by the most desperate devices, losing their hold upon sensitive observers like Guru Nanak, and with their tradition on the verge of final dissolution.

The plays that Guru Nanak mentions were destined to survive a few years more and contribute something to the rise of new forms of Vaishnava mystery play that were better suited to the conditions of their age. Only this chance account preserved in the Sikh scriptures makes it possible to trace the line of development through an obscure period of India's cultural history. Thanks to Guru Nanak's words, we can affirm an unbroken continuity of the North Indian Vaishnava dramas.

Let us take note now of Guru Nanak's appraisal of these Vaishnava plays, as a religious teacher. Guru Nanak was not a cultural historian, we must remember, but the initiator of an ardent religious movement. The theatre, as such, is far from the centre of his concern. What interests him is the possibility of the knowledge of God. He writes about the plays

only, because he has important things to say about them as forms of the religious quest. His critique is original and it is profound. When we understand Guru Nanak's appraisal of these *lilas* we will understand why Sikhism preserved its separate identity and did not merge in the Hindu Bhakti movement with which it had so many doctrinal and historical ties.

Indian thinkers of many sorts have at one time or another found fault with the Vaishnava *lilas*. The most common type of criticism has been made on ethical grounds. The *Bhagavata Purana* itself (X.33.25-28) quotes a man who objected to the behaviour of Krishna with the *gopis* as immoral. Another type of Hindu objection is found in a passage of the *Svang* of Gopi Chand as collected in R.C. Temple's *The Legends of the Punjab*, reprinted at this University in 1963.⁶ The ballad-writer takes the point of view that attending Raslila performances is a very unseemly habit for sannyasis, at least. As the story unrolls, we find that Guru Macchandarnath is in public disgrace because it has become known that he is doting upon the performances of *rasmandalis*, he is following after the troupes as they move about and attending their dances. Even Macchandar's disciple Gorakhnath is shocked. However *ras*-going may become a habit with a householder, there is some Hindu opinion that is not willing to tolerate it in a yogi. For them, it amounts to a repudiation of one's vow of *sannyasa*.

Even the dramas about Rama, who is usually seen as the very soul of propriety, are ruled out of bounds by the Jain writer Jinapalopadhyaya, mentioned above, who in his thirteenth-century commentary on the *Upadesarasayanarasa* says that ideal Jains "dance religious dramas only, but not those connected with Rama, Ravana and the like."⁷ The Jain preceptor has made his principle of *ahimsa* his moral touchstone here. Evidently, he has the bloody battles and climatic slayings of the final book of the Ramayana in mind, and he cannot see the spectacles of the Ravanavadh as anything but a bad moral example for serious Jains.

The objection of the founder of Sikhism is different. Morality—at least on the superficial level—is not at the centre of his concern. He does not say anything about the alleged improprieties of Krishna and the *gopis*. He is disgusted with the way in which the actors prostitute their sacred profession for the sake of gain, but he does not magnify this mercenary offence of theirs into a great crime.

What really disturbs the Guru is a theological misconception that he sees at the bottom of their whole theatrical enterprise. It is their notion that God can be approached by turning one's awareness upon anything that is within the grasp of the senses, or that God can be known by knowing any being that has form. To understand why Guru Nanak reacts so strongly and expresses himself at such length here, we must realize that strongly contrasting philosophical presuppositions were in confrontation with one another as Guru Nanak subjected the actors to a cool gaze at those performances in Vrindaban. The assumption of the Vaishnava actors was that the Lord, who is transcendent in his ultimate

nature and beyond our comprehension, for the sake of man, descends to the world from time to time and takes birth in the form of an *avatara*. By his grace, He makes a manifestation of Himself available in an accommodated form, so that devotees may know Him and worship Him as God is genuinely manifested in these incarnations; the earthly forms that God assumes mediate to man an effective knowledge of Himself. Furthermore, these *particular* actors seem to share the belief of later times that actors, as *svarupas*, become manifestations of those divine manifestations; that they are channels for knowledge of the divine nature and may be worshipped as God Himself, present in a corporeal form.

To Guru Nanak this is a notion that is full of pride and futility. He believes that God is not only transcendental but ever unique in relation to His creation. The knowledge of the True One will never come, therefore, in any experience of the eye or the ear. It comes only through a unique channel of its own, supersensual and inward, when the Guru speaks wordlessly in the heart of a believer.

Guru Nanak's counter-statement against the assumptions of these actors is a continuous thread that binds together the non-descriptive parts of the *Asa ki Var*. He opens the hymn with a long series of passages of theological nature that are intended to prepare the reader for a proper understanding of the actors when they are finally mentioned. What he wants his followers to understand is that these Ramas and Krishnas and those who represent them on the stage must be seen as aspects of God's creation, not as aspects of God Himself.

To insist that a being belongs to the creation does not mean, for Guru Nanak, that it is bad. When God had created the world, says Nanak, "seated He beheld (His work) with delight."⁸ Nor are created things illusory: "True are Thy regions. . . True Thy worlds and true Thy creation," says Nanak.⁹ Nor are created things sordid and of small worth. The lines of *sloka* III, "Wonderful Thy creatures. . . wonderful their forms, wonderful their colours," are themselves one of the world's wonderful expressions of the religious man's joy as he beholds the work of God in nature. But Guru Nanak ends this beautiful stanza with a warning that one must understand the nature and limitations of the natural world.¹⁰ Our admiration for natural things must not confuse our minds regarding their true status. The next stanza emphasizes the fact that all things in the world exist by the power of God and not by any power of their own, and that the God who commands them all is absolutely unrivalled.¹¹ The one God is unborn and undying,¹² but man dies and has to go in fear before a judge and accept punishment for his deeds.¹³ Such is the fearful responsibility of every creature, says *sloka* IV—even of the sun, the moon and the gods. Only the Formless One is exempt from this fear.¹⁴

At this point, Guru Nanak has set the framework for his mention of the Vaishnava performers. His readers are prepared to understand at once that in seeing these performers they are in no sense seeing God.

He hardly needs to say, as he does, that "all the Rams were dust." Of course the Rams of all those stories were creatures of God only and the same is true of all the actors that enter the marketplace and put on their glittering show. Their bodies, though covered with the world's finest jewels, will become ashes, and their words fall down useless.¹⁵

His polemic finished, Guru Nanak now sets forth his own positive path, the Sikh way: "By God's grace, man obtaineth it, skill and orders are useless. . . If the Kind One look with kindness, then is the true Guru obtained."¹⁶

What does Guru Nanak mean by "true Guru"—the one who is to be relied upon rather than the *avatars* and their imitators, to bring one to the truth?

If we were to take this word "Guru" in its most obvious modern meaning, we would have to believe that Guru Nanak was advertising his own services. In that case, the *Asa ki Var* would come to its climax in nothing more than the familiar rivalry between religious organizations. There are many indications in our text, however, that Nanak means by "Guru" an activity of God himself in the human psyche. Obtaining the Guru is not mere submission to a human leader, but something inward in which the knowledge of God is finally attained. There is a discipline to this end, and the human Guru instructs his disciples in it.¹⁷ It includes the repeating of the name of the Formless God,¹⁸ meditation upon the True One,¹⁹ and longing for him throughout the blessed watches of the night.²⁰ To those who follow this instruction, the Creator Himself, without any meditation, makes Himself known in a direct Word to the heart, and it is only there that one should seek Him.

This illuminating hymn enables us to see Sikhism and Vaishnavism making their own distinctive choices in one of the great options of the religious life. Guru Nanak chooses a universalistic path that relies upon an intuitive awareness of a transcendent God who is not knowable in the outward form of any culture. The Vaishnava, ever the guardian of the critical values of the Hindu lay civilization, adores God in the figures of his sacred history which embody the ideals of Hindu social life and which symbolize the cosmic powers that sustain it.

All religions hold, and must hold, that there is a bridge of some kind whereby the schism between man and God can come to an end. If they did not hold out a hope of such a bridge, they would not be religions but mere philosophies. One great faith trusts in the bridge of prophecy, holding that God Himself bridges the gap supernaturally in revealed words of divine command. Nanak rests his faith on the "Inner Voice." The Vaishnava believes in a universe that is metaphysically more homogeneous, and that God can implant in the world revelatory forms that give genuine intimation of Himself as the source of all that is good.

Even with the best of goodwill towards one another, it is difficult for religions that elect different paths in this matter to merge their identities.

They are forced to pursue their own ways, not because they cannot tolerate one another's ideas, but because the patterns of their practical religious life require cultivation in the social life of separate groups. I presume that this is the force that has been operating here in India where the great Sikh and Vaishnava communities have been pursuing their own *sadhanas* with every respect for each other.

I shall not myself attempt any evaluative comment on the differing ideas we have discussed. Both have borne many admirable fruits; both can be defended. I shall not end my paper with opinion but with a statement that all, I hope, will accept as a fact: that Guru Nanak offers in the *Asa ki Var* an exceptionally incisive analysis of the Vaishnava theory of *avatars* from the standpoint of another classical type of religion, and that few, if any, observers of the Vaishnava *lilas* have honoured them with a more thorough theological examination.

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THE FIVE SYMBOLS OF SIKHISM*

J. P. SINGH UBEROI

The Structural Method

The custom of wearing long and unshorn hair (*kes*) is among the most cherished and distinctive signs of an individual's membership of the Sikh *Panth*, and it seems always to have been so. The explicit injunction to this effect was early established as one of the four major taboos (*kuraht*) that are impressed upon the neophyte at the ceremony of initiation into Sikhism, and unshorn hair is one of the five symbols that every Sikh should wear on his person. Yet there exists hardly any systematic attempt in Sikh studies to explain and interpret the origin and significance of this custom.¹ As a religious system, Sikhism is antiritualistic in its doctrinal content and general tone, so that a study of the few obligatory rites and ceremonies that are associated with it in its institutional or social aspect should be of considerable interest for its own sake. Moreover, if our investigation of the connection between the nature of Sikhism as a whole and its five symbols, including the specific custom of remaining unshorn, were to be made in a comparative and empirical spirit and according to rules of method capable of universal application, we may expect that the solution of this particular problem would also elucidate certain general problems of the sociology of religion, for example, regarding the nature of religious innovation and its institutionalization.

I am not myself able to adequately investigate the problem at present, since I do not possess the requisite linguistic proficiency to study the original Punjabi sources, and without acquiring a first-hand knowledge of them, I cannot proceed satisfactorily. The argument and interpretation presented in this paper will be based solely on the information available in English, and for my reliance on second-hand sources that are incomplete and liable to error, I make an apology in advance. I shall hope, nevertheless, that the sociological method or scheme of inter-

*This is a revised version of the paper published in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Vol. 4 (Simla, 1967). I am grateful to the authorities of the Institute for allowing it to be reprinted.

pretation that I shall adopt might invoke some interest. For the results achieved, or those capable of being achieved, in a line of enquiry depend not only on the evidence examined and its authenticity, but also on the method of analysis and interpretation followed.

The particular method adopted here, which may be called the structural method, implies that, for a proper theoretical understanding or explanation, the ceremonial custom or rite in question must be viewed from two interrelated aspects. We should attempt to determine (1) its ideological meaning within a particular system of symbolic thought, and (2) its social function within a particular social system of groups and categories. The first aspect, which we may call explanation at the level of culturally conditioned thought and belief, is a matter of examining the ceremony or rite as a condensed statement, the symbolic expression of certain characteristic cultural ideas and values. In the second aspect of my study I move to the level of institutionalized behaviour or social action, and seek to relate the rite and the social occasion of its performance to the wider social system of the group or category of persons who recognize the obligation to perform it. In neither case do we consider the particular rite in isolation but bear in mind the context of the other rites with which it is associated in reality, and at either level of analysis our understanding proceeds by seeking to relate the part of its larger whole, the piece to the pattern. Only after these necessary steps have been taken in the context of a particular culture or society, may we rightly proceed further to compare the meanings and social functions of similar rites observed in two or more different cultures, or even of the same rite in a single culture during different historical periods.

Combining these two aspects or levels of thought and behaviour which it is convenient to distinguish for analysis, we may state the central assumption of our procedure in the form that all ceremonies and rites are expressive and affirmative in character, that is, they embody and communicate abstract meanings and values in concrete shape. The obligatory and oft-repeated social performance of a body of rites serves to give definitive expression and form to a people's collective life and ideas. It affirms to themselves and to others the structural coherence of their particular pattern of culture, thought and social organization as an ordered whole, and contributes to maintain and develop that pattern from generation to generation. These effects together constitute, according to our main theoretical assumption, the *raison d'être* of ritual behaviour and symbolic thought.

It will be apparent to anyone who has made the attempt that an investigation of the exact meaning and social function of a rite is a complex and difficult task. It is a process like that of ascertaining the grammar and syntax of a language, its structure as against its lexicon, which cannot be done by a simple enquiry from a native speaker or

informant. For a ritual is capable by its inner nature of involving several abstract meanings and social references and, moreover, these generally are not readily accessible at the conscious surface of life but require to be extracted, as it were, from the subconscious. It is, therefore, especially necessary in this field of study to avoid all easy inferences from intuition or deductive reasoning and to adhere to explicitly formulated rules of method.

Symbols, Sects and Initiations

The cultural association of a man's hair, especially long hair, with magical or sacred ideas is known from many parts of the world. It is well recognized in general terms to be a symbol of manliness, virility, honour, power, aggression and so on. For example, in very early Europe, the Achaeans, who conquered Greece, customarily wore their hair long and wild. The Semitic story of Samson and Delilah, as told in the Old Testament, well illustrates the virtue of remaining unshorn. We can readily locate many similar examples in classical Hinduism. The Institutes of Manu specify: "Even should a man be in wrath, let him never seize another by the hair. When a Brahman commits an offence for which the members of other castes are liable to death, let his hair be shaved off as sufficient punishment."

We should, however, be careful to remember that, like all sacred or tabooed objects, long hair can also equally carry the opposite connotation. It can be regarded, especially when unkempt, as signifying something unclean, dangerous or abandoned. We must thus refer, according to the rules of our method, to the actual context and situation in order to determine which of these two elements is predominant in a particular case.

That the precise physical state of the hair is always relevant to its symbolic meaning, but is never itself the deciding factor, can be made clear from the example of the Chinese pigtail, which superficially resembles the Hindu *shikha* (scalp-lock) in appearance. The Manchus, a foreign dynasty, in fact first instituted the pigtail among the Chinese in A.D. 1644 as a sign of their subjection. It later became accepted as a characteristic Mandarin custom, even as a sign of honour. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Taiping rebellion and in the early twentieth century Sun Yat-sen's movement and others sought to dispose of it, remembering its original significance. The Taipings did so by wearing long the entire hair of their heads and so became known as the "long-haired rebels," whereas the twentieth-century revolutionaries proceeded to cut all their hair short, literally throwing the pigtail away. The complete contrast between these two outcomes of a single impulse is not without interest for our study.

In Sikhism, the injunction to remain unshorn is expressly associated

with the ceremony of initiation, and it is in that context that we must primarily explain it. Now every initiation rite evidently possesses the nature of an investiture or conferment, since through it some new status with its consequent rights and obligations is conferred symbolically upon the neophyte, and he or she enters on a new mode of existence. But every initiation rite necessarily also contains the somewhat less obvious element of renunciation or divestiture, whereby the neophyte symbolically discards or has taken away from him attributes of his old status and mode of existence. One must ritually first abandon the previous course or phase of social existence in order to properly enter the new. Admittedly, the positive element of investiture or conferment generally predominates in initiation rites, but the element of renunciation or divestiture is always present to some degree. This negative element may even be uppermost in certain cases, for example, in initiation into monkhood.

I want now to draw attention to a class of initiation rites of this latter kind that were widely prevalent in the Punjab at the time that Sikhism took its birth. These were the rites of renunciation (*sannyasa*) through which an individual obtained entrance to one or other of the medieval mendicant orders (*Sannyasis*), etc. It is my contention that an examination of this class of rites with the details of the Sikh initiation rite, borne in mind, shows a remarkable relation of structural inversion to exist between the two. I want to suggest that, in terms of the symbolic language and ritual idiom of the times, at least one cultural meaning of the Sikh initiation rite was that it stood as the antithesis of the rites of Hindu renunciation.

A *Sannyasi* is a person who, having passed through the first three stages (*asramas*) of Brahmanical Hinduism, renounces the world and is cared for by others. It may perhaps be that the *Sannyasi* religious orders were older than the Brahmanical institution of *Sannyasa*, the fourth and last stage of life. At any rate, the orders seem to have been open to entry by the individual person of almost any physical age. The *Sannyasi* orders had decayed significantly during the Buddhist period and then split into sub-orders with heterodox creeds. They were reformed by Sankaracharya, whose four disciples instituted four *maths* (orders) that later developed into numerous *padas* (sub-orders). Each sub-order was said to have two sections, one celibate and mendicant, and the other not. All *Sannyasis* were further graded according to four degrees of increasing sanctity (*Kavichar*, *Bahudak*, *Hans* and *Param Hans*).

The *Sannyasi* initiation rite was and continues to be essentially as follows.² The candidate intending to attain renunciation first goes on a pilgrimage to find a *guru*, who should be a Brahman, and the latter satisfies the former regarding his fitness, and proceeds to initiate him. The neophyte commences with the *shraddha* (obsequies) to his ancestors to fulfil his obligations to them. He next performs the sacrificial *baji*

hawan and gives away whatever he possesses, severing all connexion with the world. His beard, moustache and head are entirely shaved (*mundan*), retaining only the scalp-lock (*shikha*), and the sacred thread is put aside. He then performs the *atma-shraddha* or his own death rites. (An initiated *Sannyasi* is thus counted as socially deceased, and when he dies is not cremated but buried in a sitting posture without ceremony). The scalp-lock is now cut off, and the neophyte enters the river or any other body of water with it, and the sacred thread in hand, and throws both away, resolving "I am no one's and no one is mine." On emerging from the water he starts naked to the north but the *guru* stops him and gives him a loin-cloth (*kopin*), staff (*danda*) and a water-vessel (*jalpatra*) kept out of the neophyte's personal property. Finally, the *guru* gives him the *mantra* (spiritual formula) in secret, and admits him to a particular *math* (order), *sampradaya*, etc."

The initiation rite of the *Jogi* order, which was also widespread in the medieval Punjab, is a very similar thing. According to the *Punjab Census Reports*, 1912, a *Jogi* is a corruption of *Yogi*, a term applied originally to *Sannyasis* well advanced in the practice of *yogabhyasa*. "The *Jogis* are really a branch of *Sannyasis*, the order having been founded by Guru Machhandar (Matsyendra) Nath and Gorakh Nath *Sannyasis*, who were devoted to the practice of Yoga and possessed great supernatural power. The followers of Guru Gorakh Nath are absorbed more in the Yoga practices than in the study of the Vedas and other religious literature, but between a real good *Jogi* and a *Yogi Sannyasi* there is not much difference, except perhaps that the former wears the *mudra* (rings) in his ears. The *Jogis* worship Bhairon, the most fearful form of Shiva."¹ Their main sub-divisions are stated to be the *Darshani* or *Kanphatu* ("split-ear"), known as *Naths*, who wear the *mudra* (earrings); and the *Aughar*, who do not.

In *Jogi* initiation, the neophyte (*chela*) is first made to fast for two or three days. A knife is then driven into the earth,² and the candidate vows by it not to (1) engage in trade, (2) take employment, (3) keep dangerous weapons, (4) become angry when abused, and (5) marry. He must also scrupulously protect his ears, for "a *Jogi* whose ears were cut used to be buried alive, but is now only excommunicated." The neophyte's scalp-lock is removed by the *guru*, and he is shaved by a barber; his sacred thread is also removed. He bathes and is smeared with ashes, then given ochre clothes to wear, including the *kafni* (shroud). The *guru-mantra* is communicated secretly, and the candidate is now a probationer (*aughar*). After several months' probation his ears are pierced and earrings inserted by the *guru* or adept, who is entitled to an offering of one rupee and a quarter. "The *chela*, hitherto an *aughar*, now becomes a *nath*, certain set phrases (not *mantras*) being recited."³

After initiation, a *Jogi* may either remain a celibate and ascetic mendicant (*Nanga*, *Naga*, *Nadi*, *Nihang*, or *Kanphata*) living on alms ;

or he may relapse and become a secular *Jogi* (called *Bindi-Nagi*, *Sanyogi*, *Gharbari* or *Grihasti*, having property and spouse).

A *Jogi* usually joins one or other of the various *panths* or "doors" (sub-orders), whose traditional number was twelve.

I mention finally the initiation rites of the Dadupanthi Order, stated to have been founded by Dadu, a Gaur Brahman, who died A.D. 1703.⁷ In this rite the *guru* in the presence of all the *sadhus* shaves off the neophyte's scalp-lock and covers his head with a skullcap (*kapali*) like the one which Dadu wore. He dons ochre clothes and is taught the *guru-mantra*, "which he must not reveal."⁸ The rite concludes with the distribution of sweets.

The Sikh Initiation and Its Five Symbols

In my view, there can be little doubt that the taboo against cutting or trimming hair (*kurahṭ*) of the Sikh initiation rite is to be understood as a specific inversion in symbolic terms of the custom of total depilation enjoined upon the *Jogi* or *Sannyasi* initiate. The element of symbolic inversion, as I see, is, in fact, much more pervasive, but it has been entirely overlooked owing to the prevalence, among students of religion, of the scholarly method of endlessly adducing parallels and similarities to the neglect of significant relations of contrast, counterpoint, inversion and opposition.⁹ In contradistinction to the *Jogi* and *Sannyasi* ritual of nakedness or smearing oneself with ashes, the Sikh neophyte is made to come tidily clothed to the ceremony. The earrings worn by the *Jogis* are specifically forbidden to him.¹⁰ Instead of requiring the *Sannyasi's* resolve, "I am no one's and no one is mine," the Sikh rite, emphasizing a new birth, requires the neophyte to affirm that his father is Guru Gobind Singh and his mother is Mata Sahib Kaur, and that he was born in Kesgarh and lives in Anandpur. Even more significantly the initiator, instead of being the individual *guru*, is a collective group, the Five Loved Ones (*Panj Pyare*) composed of any five good Sikhs. Instead of the *guru-mantra* being communicated secretly to the neophyte, as with the *Sannyasis*, *Jogis* and Dadupanthis, the Sikh Gurus' word must be spoken loud and clear by the initiators. Finally, in contrast to the *Jogi* vow never to touch weapons, the Sikh neophyte is invested ritually with the *kirpan* (sword) as one of the five K's that he must always wear thereafter.

I think we may safely say that the Sikh initiation rite contains a marked theme of inversion in relation to the rites of social renunciation established by the medieval mendicant orders that preceded Sikhism. Like them, Sikhism was instituted as a religious brotherhood open to all who sought salvation, but its spiritual and social aims were in direct contrast to what theirs had been. Whereas they had sought to obtain emancipation or deliverance through individual renunciation at the price,

as their rites signify, of social death, the Sikh community was to affirm the normal social world as itself the battleground of freedom. That is why, in my opinion, its initiation rite makes the positive theme of investiture prevail wholly over the negative theme of divestiture, and taking certain widely established customs of renunciation, emphatically inverts them. The meaning of being unshorn, in particular, is thus constituted by the "negation of the negation." It signifies the permanent renunciation of renunciation.

This hypothesis, however, is not complete; it requires a further consideration regarding the five K's. We have so far concentrated our attention on the initiation rite itself and attempted to understand the meaning of *kes* in that context, but the five symbols of Sikhism are worn for life. Now, following the initiation, the *Sannyasi* custom is either to wear all their hair or shave it all. The *jatadhari Jogis* follow the former course — though among all *Jogis* the signification of renunciation seems to be borne primarily by their pierced ears and ear-rings. The important order of *Bairagis* also keeps long hair,¹¹ whereas the *Uttradhi Dadupanthis* shave the head, beard and moustache.¹² The *Rasul Shahis*, a Muslim order founded in the eighteenth century, also shave completely the head, moustache and eyebrows.¹³ In all instances, where long hair is worn, it is worn as matted hair (*jata*), frequently dressed in ashes. According to the Sikh custom, on the other hand, unshorn hair (*kes*) is invariably associated with the comb (*kangha*, the second of the five K's) which performs the function of constraining the hair and imparting an orderly arrangement to it. This meaning is made even clearer by the custom of the Sikh turban. The *kes* and *kangha* thus form a unitary pair of symbols, each evoking the meaning of the other, and their mutual association explains the full meaning of *kes* as distinct from *jata*. The *jata*, like the shaven head and pierced ears, symbolizes the renunciation of social citizenship; *kes* and *kangha* symbolize its orderly assumption.

The *kirpan* (sword) and the *kara* (steel bracelet) similarly constitute another pair of symbols, neither of which can be properly understood in isolation. Without going into the evidence, I merely state that in my view the steel bracelet imparts the same orderly control over the sword which the comb does the hair. The *kirpan*, in its conjoint meaning with the *kara*, is a sword ritually constrained and, thus, made into the mark of every citizen's honour, not only of the soldier's vocation. Finally, the *kachh*, a garment for the loin and thighs, the last of the five K's is also to be understood as an agent of constraint like the comb and the bracelet, though the subject of its control is not overly stated. Obviously, it is a sartorial symbol signifying manly reserve in commitment to the procreative world as against renouncing it altogether.

In case it might be objected to that I am merely profaning the

mystery in advancing the last hypothesis, I hasten to quote Guru Gobind Singh himself on the subject:

Ajmer Chand inquired what the marks of the Guru's Sikhs were, that is, how they could be recognized. The Guru replied, 'My Sikhs shall be in their natural form, that is, without the loss of their hair or foreskin, in opposition to ordinances of the Hindus and the Muhammadans.'¹⁴

We can now formulate the proposition that the primary meaning of the five symbols, when they are taken together, lies in the ritual conjunction of two opposed forces or aspects. The unshorn hair, the sword and the implicit uncircumcised male organ express the first aspect. They are assertive of forceful human potentialities that are of themselves amoral, even dangerous, powers. The combination of the two aspects is elaborated in the form of three pairs of polar opposites (*kangha/kes: kara/kirpan: kachh/uncircumcised member*), thus generating, with one term left unstated, the five Sikh symbols. The aspect of assertion and the aspect of constraint combine to produce what we may call, for want of a better word, the spirit of affirmation, characteristic of Sikhism.

Hinduism and Sikhism

So much then for the structure of cultural meanings. We must now turn, although very briefly and simply, to the second level of analysis required by our method, and consider the wider social context of Sikhism's origin and growth. I do not here give all the evidence or make every qualification, but state the problem in broad and general terms as follows:

The Hindu system of social relations called caste, using that term to include *varna* as well as *jati*, is, in fact, only the half of Hinduism. The whole Hindu *dharma* is described by the term *varnasramadharma*, that is, caste as well as the institution of the four stages or statuses (*asramas*) of individual life. If sociologists have hitherto concentrated on the institution of caste to the exclusion of the latter institution, I cannot claim to understand their reasons. For the social system of caste was always surrounded in reality by a penumbral region, as it were, of non-caste, whose principles abrogated those of caste and birth, and the fourth *asrama* (*Sannyasa*) constituted a door through which the individual was recommended to pass from the world of caste to that of its denial. The mutual relations of the two worlds, and I have no doubt that it was mutual, is of the greatest significance to a full understanding of both.¹⁵ The system of local caste groups predetermined by birth, on the one hand, and the system of voluntaristic cult associations or orders and sects, on the other, cut across one another, forming the essential warp and woof of Hinduism. The third structural feature, kingship, necessary

to uphold *varnasramadharma*, possessed its own relations with the two contrasting worlds of the Brahman and the *Sannyasi*. Thus the total ideological and social structure of the medieval Hindu world, including its political institution, rested upon a tripartite division and a system of interrelations among the three worlds symbolized by the King, the Brahman and the *Sannyasi*. The domains of *rajya*, *varna grihastha* and of *sannyasa* formed the three sides of the medieval triangle. The same total structure can perhaps be seen in Islamic civilization of the period in the division and interrelations among the three spheres of *hukumat*, *shari'at* and *tariqat* or *haqiqat*. These are all problems for future investigation, when broken down into suitable units for study.

An order like the *Aghor-panthi Jogis*, who appear to have smeared themselves with excrements, drunk out of a human skull and occasionally dug up the body of a newly buried child to eat it "thus carrying out the principle that nothing is common or unclean in its extreme logical conclusion,"¹⁶ evidently constituted the truly living shadow of caste orthodoxy. The theme of antinomian protest could hardly be carried further (unless it was by the *Bam-margis* who added sexual promiscuity to the list). Yet it could be reliably said of other *Jogi* sub-orders that "in the Simla hills the *Jogis* were originally mendicants, but have now become householders," and that the secular *Jogis*, called *Sanyogis*, "in parts of the Punjab form a true caste."¹⁷ We can resolve this seeming contradiction only if we regard both these *Jogi* conditions as forming the different stages or phases of a single cycle of development. According to this view, we should say that any particular order or sub-order that once renounced caste with all its social rights and duties and walked out into the ascetic wilderness through the front door of *sannyasa*, could later become disheartened or lose the point of its protest, and even end by seeking to re-enter the house of caste through the backdoor. Of course, as a particular order or section fell back, so to speak, from the frontier of asceticism and abandoned its non-procreative existence without property and occupation. Its function within the total system of *varnasramadharma* would be fulfilled by some other order or section, since the ascetic or protestant impulse itself remained a constant feature. During its ascetic period, an order or sub-order may occupy one or the other of two positions, or pass through them both successively. It may either adopt a theory and practice completely opposed to those of caste, like the *Aghor-panthis* and *Bam-margis*, and be, for that reason, regarded as heterodox and esoteric: or it might remain within the pale, and link itself to the caste system through the normal sectarian affiliations of caste people. A "heterodox" or antinomian sect, we should say, is one opposed to caste as its living shadow; an "orthodox" is complementary to the caste system, its other half within Hinduism.

I would not say that all historically known orders of renunciation, in fact, passed through these various stages of development, but I main-

tain that we must construct some such analytical scheme of their typical life-history with reference primarily to their origin, function and direction of movement in relation to the caste system. For that would enable us to classify the vast number of known orders and sub-orders into a limited number of sociological types, and obviate many difficulties in our study of them. In particular, until we can fully understand the developmental cycle of medieval mendicant orders we cannot place the political phenomena of the "fighting *Jogis*" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the contemporaneous militant struggles of the *Roshaniya* sect,¹⁸ the *Satnami* Revolt of 1675, or plunder of Dacca in 1763 by *Sannyasis*, etc., in their proper perspective. The analytical paradigm proposed must account under one and the same theory for cases or phases of political quietism as well as of political activism and conflict.

As a social movement, the early Sikhism no doubt possessed many features in common with other religious brotherhoods of a certain type. If Sikhism as a whole, nevertheless, broke free from the convoluted cycle of caste versus non-caste that overtook other protestant or anti-nomian brotherhoods, to what cause or causes did it owe its freedom? It is true that Sikhism, as we noted earlier, barred the door of asceticism and so did not lose itself in the esoteric wilderness, but we have also to explain why it did not duly return, as so many others did, to the citadel of caste. The new departure of Sikhism, in my interpretation, was that it set out to annihilate the categorical partitions, intellectual and social, of the medieval world. It rejected the opposition of the common citizen or householder versus the renouncer, and of the ruler versus these two, refusing to acknowledge them as separate and distinct modes of existence. It acknowledged the powers of the three spheres of *raja*, *sannyasa* and *grihastha*, but sought to invest their virtues conjointly in a single body of faith and conduct.

The social function of the Sikh initiation rite is, I think, precisely this: to affirm the characteristic rights and responsibilities of the three spheres as equally valid and to invest them as an undivided unit in the neophyte. The new Sikh, therefore, takes no *Jogi* vow to renounce his procreative power by not marrying; instead, he dons the *kachh* of continence. Instead of vowing like the *Jogi* never to touch weapons or take other employment or engage in trade, every occupation is, henceforth, open to him, including that of soldiering, maintaining a household or assuming political command. The only thing he is asked to abjure is the degrading practice of adopting the begging. The single key of the renunciation of renunciation was thus charged to unlock all dividing doors in the mansion of medievalism. Whether it succeeded, and to what extent, in doing so, is another matter.

The structural method of analysis and interpretation, of which I have attempted to provide an example, shows us that we can establish a

definite connexion between the five symbols of Sikhism and its whole nature.

If my previous pairing of symbols and the assumption of an unstated term be accepted, the five symbols of Sikhism may be said to signify in this respective pairs the virtues of *sannyasa yoga* (*kes* and *kangha*), *grihastha yoga* (*kachh* and the uncircumcised state) and *rajya yoga* (*kirpan* and *kara*). As the authenticating sign and seal of Sikhism, the five K's together affirm the unity of man's estate as being all of a piece: this we may take to be the final meaning and function of remaining for ever unshorn in the world. Our analysis would also lead to the conclusion that the total human emancipation of religious man, and not any ideal of a synthesis or reconciliation of Hinduism and Islam, was the faith and endeavour of Sikhism from its inception. The institutionalization of that endeavour surely marked the opening of the modern period of history in the Punjab.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A noteworthy exception is Kapur Singh, *Parasharprasna, The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh* (Jullundur: Hind Publishers, 1959), especially Chapters 4, 5.
2. The material presented in the succeeding pages is derived from *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (based on the Census Reports for the Punjab, 1883 and 1892), compiled by H. A. Rose, 3 Vols., II, III (Lahore: Samuel T. Weston at Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1911 and 1914).

This work is referred to hereinafter as *Punjab Tribes and Castes*.

3. *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, VII, 358.
4. P. Hari Kishen Kaul (*Punjab Census Report*, 1962), quoted in *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, III, 361.
5. The Jogis hold the earth and everything made of it in great respect. "The earthen carpet, the earthen pitcher, the earthen pillar and the earthen roof," is a saying that describes their life. Like the Sanayasis, Jogis are buried underground and not cremated.
6. *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, II, 400.
7. *Ibid.*, II, 215, where it is also said that other accounts make Dadu contemporary with Dara Shikoh, and still others with Guru Gobind Singh.
8. *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, II, 216.
9. This neglect is apparent, for example, in the work of A. Van Gennep, the French sociologist, *Les rites de passage*, 1908. See English translation by Vizedom & Caffee, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 97.

The same method is followed by Kapur Singh, *Parasharprasna, The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh* (Jullundur: Hind Publishers, 1959), chs. 5 and 7.

10. Teja Singh, *Sikhism, Its Ideals and Institutions* (Calcutta: Longmans, Green & Co., 1938), p. 113.
11. *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, II, 36.
12. *Ibid.*, II, 216.

13. Ibid., III, 324.
14. M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), V, 99.
15. Caste (and particularly the position of Brahmans) was stated by Max Weber to "the fundamental institution of Hinduism:" See H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), p. 316.

This purely one-sided view is especially curious in the German sociologist, since he was the first to make use (in 1916) of the "partly excellent scientific Census Reports" (Ibid., p. 397) which also form the basis of *Punjab Tribes and Castes* and of the present paper.
17. *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, II, 404.
18. Ibid., II, 399n., 409.

LI

TAGORE ON THE SIKHS

AMALENDU BOSE

When I stand here to pay my humble and reverence-laden homage to the glorious child of God, Guru Nanak, whose holy birth five hundred years ago brought solace, joy, purity and strength to millions down the corridors of history, I seek your permission to bring to your notice the deep impact produced by his astonishing personality and by certain memorable events of Sikh history upon the mind and art of Rabindranath Tagore and, through his poetry, upon the thinking of generations of Bengalis. We cannot contain the seven seas in a teacup; we cannot see the entire expanse of the sky through a pipe-hole; we cannot limit the universally applicable meaning of the great Guru's teachings to the narrow angles of particular incidents or values. His greatness is transcendental, all-encompassing, timeless. But it is precisely this all-encompassing and transcendental quality of the Guru's personality that comes home to us when we consider how the creative imagination of a great modern poet blossomed forth in response to the Guru's teachings.

Bengal is about a thousand miles from Guru Nanak's homeland. But what is a thousand miles to the spirit of a universalist who travelled thousands and thousands of miles, north and south, east and west, the east including Bengal and Assam? Four hundred years after the Guru's birth, a distinguished Bengali, a man of deeply religious sensibilities, the poet Tagore's venerable father, Maharishi Devendranath Tagore, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, went year after year to the Golden Temple of Amritsar in the quest for joy and truth. We learn from the poet's autobiography that for some years, the Maharishi's personal attendant was a fine-featured young Sikh, named Lenu, who accompanied his master to Calcutta. A boy of barely ten, the poet became attached to this Sikh youth, and entertained him by exhibiting his toy-ship that could gently roll, right and left, in tune with a toy-organ. Shortly, after his *upanayan*, the shaven-headed boy of eleven accompanied his father to Dalhousie, halting for a month at Amritsar. Let me quote here from the poet's autobiography:

The Gurdwara of Amritsar, I remember as a dream. Many were the mornings when I went to the Sikh temple set within a tank. *Bhajan* was incessant there. Seated in the midst of the Sikh worshippers there, my father would join them in song and they would greet him with pleased cordiality.

The poet further says that his father would often invite one or another of the *bhajan*-singers of the Temple to go to his house and sing songs.

The recollection of this boyhood experience remained with the poet till his last days. Even as a teen-ager, he rendered into Bengali several songs from the *Japji* and some of them are, I understand, from a scholarly Brahmo friend of mine, still sung at the Sunday prayers of the Samaj. It is my belief that the pure monotheism of the *Japji* songs appealed deeply to the monotheistic mind of the youthful Brahmo, the poet Tagore, and, further, the Guru's beautiful exhortations to his followers to abjure all that is false and narrow and fissiparous and to imbibe all that is true and comprehensive and unifying, and especially the constant tone of absolute surrender to the One Deity, are the qualities, among others, of the *Japji* songs that won the poet's heart. I may be permitted here to quote just two of these songs (as rendered into English by my young friend Purshottam Lal):

Hundreds of thousands!
Of earths, of skies,
Of skies upon skies!
Hundreds of thousands!
They cannot be counted!
This is the one truth of the Vedas.
Ask the Kateba!
Eighteen thousand worlds!
Eighteen thousand, but the source is one!
Count them if you like!
You will die before *they* end.
He is great, says Nanak,
He knows Himself by Himself.

* * * *

Like rivers rushing into seas,
Not knowing where they go,
They praise You, O Lord,
Without knowing who You are.
O King,
O my King of kings,
All the oceans, all the mountains,
All treasures, all powers
Are like nothing, nothing
Compared even to an ant
Who has You in his heart.

What makes these songs great poetry is the white radiance and purity of their emotion, absolutely untrammelled by the pettifogging dogmas of conventional theology. Here is palpably a man of God who has felt and known and whose feeling and knowledge well up in spontaneous words. I have found that the impact of such devotional poetry — especially the songs of Nanak, Kabir and the peregrinating *Baula* of Bengal — on Tagore's own devotional poetry is considerable.

Tagore's reverence for Guru Nanak was constant and I find passing references to the Guru in numerous places in his prose. In his middle period, he wrote a series of essays on Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh and the Sikhs, in general. These essays are not learned treatises; they were not meant to be so: they are written in a remarkably simple and direct prose style for the edification of Bengali children. You will remember that eighty years ago, our school texts in history played down, for reasons of obvious political expediency, the role of the Sikhs. Tagore, therefore, sought to redress this imbalance by writing simple narrative accounts of the Guru and his followers, bringing their significance into a luminous focus. And this has been of inestimable service to the growth of interest in Bengal in the Guru and his followers. There have been distinguished scholars among the Bengalis who have made important contributions to the history of the Sikhs but none, I can assure you, has rivalled these simple accounts of Tagore, both in prose and verse, in the matter of imparting a basic knowledge and understanding of the Sikhs to Bengali children for the last six decades. One of these essays reads like a story, though it is scrupulously fact-based. It tells of the strange son of Kalu of Talwandi, the boy Nanak, who preferred the wealth of God's name to the gold that his father expected him to earn as a trader. It tells of the Guru's disciples, Mardana, Lehna, Bala Sandhu. It tells of his wide wanderings and that profound reply that he gave to some Muslims in Mecca when they objected to his stretching his legs in the direction of the Kaaba that they might be pleased to turn his legs in any direction where God was not. Tagore in the last paragraph of this essay tells his young readers:

The Sikhs whom you see around you today, men of sturdy build, handsome countenance, tough strength and unflinching courage, are the disciples of Baba Nanak. There were no Sikhs before Nanak. It was his noble personality and sublime spirituality that brought this race into existence. It is through his teachings that their temper is fearless, they keep their heads erect, their character and countenance are brightened with magnanimity.

Tagore expects our children to proceed from the effect to the cause, to some understanding of the Guru's greatness from the admirable qualities, both racial and individual, of the followers who derive their strength from him. To illustrate this belief that it is because of the purity and power of the source that the fruits are valuable, too, Tagore wrote a number of poems that rank among his finest compositions and are known to every Bengali, man or woman, who has had some school education. In 1900 were published two volumes of ballads and narratives which are now combined into a single volume entitled *Katha-O-Kahani* (Tales and Legends). Some of these poems are based on Buddhist legends and some on Sikh history—one has been woven around Banda, another

around Taru Singh, and two others concern Guru Gobind Singh. I myself admire most the last two poems for their rare depth of understanding of Guru Gobind Singh's self-exploration and moral strength during two crises of his life, but the poem on Banda, with its stirring metre and diction, is a must for every school function or social get-together where poems are recited; there are lines in this poem that Bengali revolutionaries for half a century have uttered while jumping into the fray of life and death. To give my audience here some idea of the quality of the content of the poem, I propose to offer a rendering of some of its portions in my hesitant English prose. The title of the poem is 'The Chained Hero,' *Bandi Veer*, 'Bandi' meaning a prisoner, but, I hope, my audience here will recognize the subtle sonal affinity between 'bandi' and the hero's name 'Banda.' The poem goes somewhat thus:

On the banks of the five rivers, inspired by their Guru's *mantra*, hair tied up on head, the Sikhs wake up as a unified people, fearless and dauntless. All around, a thousand voices cry, 'Jai Guruji.' Sikhs turn their gaze towards a new dawn. 'Alakh Niranjan,' they cry, and that tremendous cry breaks down all fear, all inhibition, and their glad swords rattle next to their bodies. 'Alakh Niranjan' cries the Punjab on this day.

By the banks of the five rivers, this is a day when a million hearts know no fear or care, when life and death are twin slaves at their feet.

By the banks of the five rivers are the veins of blood now liberated in the bodies of a million *bhaktas*, and do their souls, like free birds, fly up to their nests? These heroes put the mark of blood on the forehead of their motherland. Locked in the embrace of a fight to the finish, the Sikhs and the Mughals tighten their grips on each other's throats; the bitten eagle struggles against the serpent. In that deadly battle, the Sikh hero cries in resonant voice, 'Jai Guruji' and the blood-smeared faith-intoxicated Mughal repeats 'Deen, Deen.' (Banda is taken prisoner and is removed to Delhi).

At the head of the procession, the Mughal soldiers march through the dust that they raise, carrying severed heads of Sikhs stuck on their spears; seven hundred Sikhs march behind, their chains tinkle but, heedless of the danger to their lives, they still cry, 'Jai Guruji.'

When in Delhi they are to be beheaded, there is rivalry among these prisoners as to who will precede the others in laying down his life. At the day's end, a hundred brave men cry 'Jai Guruji,' and part with their heads.

When in a week, seven hundred men have been beheaded, the Qazi places the small son of Banda in the father's arms, and says the father must kill the son.

Without a word, Banda hugs his child for a moment, puts his hand on the child's head and kisses his crimson turban. Then he draws out his dagger from the sheath and says, "Fear not, my son, say 'Jai Guruji.'" "Jai Guruji, I have no fear," comes the clear voice of the child. Banda bends his left arm around the child's neck and with the right hand plunges the dagger deep into the small body. 'Jai Guruji' cries the child before his body rolls on the ground.

Stillness descends on the congregation in the court. The executioner begins to tear off flesh from Banda's body with hot pincers. Motionless stands the hero, dying without a single exclamation of pain.

I doubt if there are comparably stirring poems in many languages and, though I regret that it is beyond my capacity to render the tremendous power of the rhythm and imagery of the original, I think the incident itself is powerful enough to enter deep into the reader's sensibility. By contrast, the poem on Taru Singh is a brief piece of only sixteen lines. It goes thus:

The ground in Shahidganj became red with the blood of Sikhs taken prisoners in war and then slaughtered. Then the Nawab said, "Listen, Taru Singh, I wish to pardon you." "Why should you neglect me?" asked Taru Singh. Said the Nawab, "You are a brave man, I can't be angry with you. I shall let you off. My only request is that you will cut off your hair plait and leave it with me." Taru Singh replied, "I am so beholden to your kindness that, in return, I had better make a gift of my head along with the plait."

This is the poem, taut and terse in its verbal economy, offering us quick glimpses of the explosive passion that lies underneath the courteous exchange of compliments. And in Taru Singh, we behold one who is more than an individual Sikh hero; we behold one who is also a symbol of his race, a symbol of his faith. A parallel story occurs in one of the poems in *Sesh Saptak* (The Last Gamut) belonging to the final phase of the poet. This is once again the story of the siege of the Gurdas Nangal Fort. The *Badshah's* lieutenants have planned to starve the handful of besieged Sikhs fighting under Banda Singh; all communications between the fort and the world outside have been snapped; the besieged soldiers are reduced to eating powdered bark and branches of trees and raw meat (if any meat were available). This infernal privation comes to an end when after eight months, the fort falls; soldiers in chains shout, 'Victory to the Guru' and, day after day, severed heads of the Sikhs roll on the ground. The poet now turns the focus on to a young man in his teens, Nihal Singh, one of the chained soldiers. His is a fresh, serene countenance lit up by an inner light; it is as if some divine sculptor has carved out his eighteen-year-old body; he stands like a young cypress, straight but lissom, and an exuberant vitality overflows his body and mind. With his hands bound, he is brought to the court of the victors. The executioner is ready with his sword. At this moment, a letter arrives

from the capital, conveying Syed Abdulla Khan's order that the young man is to be set free. When they unloose the chains, Nihal asks why there should be such an order for him. He hears that his widowed mother has informed the authorities that her son is not a Sikh, that he has been forced by the Sikhs to join them. The young man's face is flushed in shame and grief; he cries, "I do not care for my life in exchange for falsehood, in truth is my final liberation, I am a Sikh."

This, too, is a great poem in which Tagore has abandoned metre and rhyme, as he did in most of his later poetry, as if he challenges the reader to see if the stark prose rhythm cannot adequately convey the character of the incident — its dramatic development, the grim background against which stands Nihal Singh, the sharp contrast between his youthful vitality and its destruction in the offing, and, above all, his unflickering adherence to Truth which is the cardinal meaning of his faith.

Of the two poems on Guru Gobind Singh, *Shesh Siksha* ("The Last Lesson") tells the story of how the Guru had once in a sudden anger killed a Pathan creditor; how to atone for this act, he brought up the Pathan's son treating him as a son and how the young Pathan became deeply devoted to the Master; how the Guru tried to arouse the young man's vengeance but failed once, and how eventually the Pathan was made to fly into a rage and to plunge a dagger into the Master's body; and how the dying Guru said, "My son, this is my last lesson for you, you must take revenge for a wrong done." This, too, is a great poem bringing out the Guru's complex personality, but the other poem entitled *Guru Govind* is, to my mind, the greatest of this group, great because of the rhythm and imagery, great because of the excruciating psychological self-exploration of the Guru during the years of solitude. A man of action and organization, Guru Gobind Singh has been passing his days in contemplation, in an endeavour to attain to that spiritual fullness which alone should entitle him to the difficult role of leadership of his people. A humanist, rather than an ascetic, his heart yearns for life in the midst of multitudes; he wakes up in his sleep, dreaming of calls from his people; his sword in the scabbard wriggles like a living thing as he watches the restlessness of his followers. Ah, what a joy it would be to throw himself in the midst of a crowd, breaking and making kingdoms, destroying tyrants, catching hold of Fate, as if it were a disobedient horse, riding through millions, leaving behind indelible footprints on flame-crimsoned grounds, always jumping across death on to life. Sometimes it is a dark night and sometimes it is a shiny day. Once the sky above is thunder-laden, torn asunder by a relentless and insane storm. But heedless, the Guru sends his call to his followers, "Come ye all to me as the waters of the five rivers flow into the sea; come ye my *bhaktas* and raise your intoxicated cry across the length and breadth of the Punjab." The Guru's voice penetrates the remotest nooks of jungles, lest there should be some timid one hiding there. As he advances, his

followers swell in number, Brahmins and Jats abandoning caste-consciousness, ready to lay down their lives. But these are visions of the future that cannot be worked out yet. Now he has to control his passionate natural humanistic desires; now he must ponder and thoroughly examine himself until he can say to all: "I have no more doubts and hesitations; I have learnt what truth is; I have found my path and all obstacles including life and death clear off from my course. A voice within tells me to stand up in the effulgence of my truth. I call ye, my followers, to come to me, let in your Guru's life so that your own lives be enriched ..." But all this is yet to be, and the Guru hardens himself to more days of strenuous self-examination. He must be like a lamp steadfast amid darkness, emitting its light in a stormy world. And, therefore, Guru Gobind Singh asks his followers to leave him alone with his unremitting self-preparation ... This is a poem containing over half-a-dozen stanzas that are memorized by every Bengali young man worth his salt; these offer us the crystallized essence of a resolute and courageous gospel of action.

In his prose and poetry, Tagore brings out some of the essential features. But these militant features acquire unparalleled purity and nobility by virtue of their never-dimmed relation to their faith. For though changing times have necessarily brought about some modification or other in the social organization of the Sikhs, there never has been a deviation from the primal spirit of their faith which they received from that incomparable man of God, Guru Nanak. I submit to this learned audience the view that a remarkably inspiring direction to that primal spirit has been indicated by Rabindranath Tagore in his poems, prose essays, and in his devotional songs, a direction for which we in the eastern regions of our country are deeply indebted to him.

GURU NANAK TO THE GURU GRANTH

A. R. WADIA

The birth of Sikhism and the growth of the Sikh military power can be appreciated in the light of the conditions that prevailed in India in the fifteenth century. India with Hinduism as her predominant religion had succumbed to the military might of Afghan Muslims from beyond the Hindu Kush. For the first time in its long history, Hinduism failed to absorb the conquerors as it had so successfully done with all the previous conquerors of India. The Muslims, too, found a strong resistance to their proselytizing zeal. A religious conflict became inevitable. Hindus entrenched in their caste-system had no interest in converting others to their faith, whereas Islam was essentially a missionary religion. It may have succeeded in gaining a few willing converts from the ranks of the untouchables, but the higher castes offered a sullen resistance which provoked the conquerors to use force as a religious weapon. This was markedly so in the Punjab, which was nearest to the Islamic countries to the West. History has shown again and again how critical epochs tend to produce heroic leaders. Guru Nanak was such a leader, born to lead India to a new religious revival and a new social goal. He was a born mystic devoted equally to the God of the Hindus and to that of the Muslims.

Though Islam came to India as a foreign religion, it brought to India two priceless gifts: the ideal of One God and the ideal of a casteless society in which all men were equal. Guru Nanak was distressed to see fanaticism of the Muslims but was deeply influenced by the rigorous monotheism and castelessness preached by Islam. Though born a Hindu, he became dissatisfied with the rituals of Hinduism and even more with the rigorousness of the caste-system. Early in life, he broke away from both. He was not willing to become a Muslim. He boldly told a *qazi*: "It's far too easy to call oneself a Muslim, but far too hard to become one." He had come to a stage of religious development when he could say: "I see here neither a Hindu nor a Musalman: only man." Music bubbled in his soul and he could preach only in song or poetry which was set to music. By whom? By a Muslim drummer, Mardana, who was his constant companion in his wanderings.

After going through the songs of Guru Nanak, one gets an impression that he was truly God-intoxicated even more than Spinoza was in Europe. He became the prophet of a new age. He preached Truth as being above everything, but for him "higher still is the true living." It has been the privilege of man to exploit woman in all climes and in all ages. It is refreshing to find Guru Nanak saying: "Why call a woman evil who giveth birth even to kings? From the woman is the woman. Without woman there is none, except the one God."

Guru Nanak had risen above all ritualism. He did not believe in fasting, for starvation is no pathway to spiritual bliss. Nor was he an advocate of penances, for "to practise penances is to reject the goodness of God. If we torture deliberately the body which is the temple of God, how are we to please Him? One should burn one's craving and not one's body." Similarly, he negated the idea of offering water to the souls of ancestors with a remarkable sense of humour. Once when he saw that being done at Hardwar, he began throwing water towards the west. That unusual act naturally evoked laughter in those who saw what he was doing. Guru Nanak coolly replied that he did so as he had farm in the west and he was not sure that there had been sufficient rainfall there. This answer provoked more laughter but he was ready with an answer: "Why? My water cannot reach a few hundred miles away, while your offering of water to your ancestors can get even to the other world!"

Guru Nanak is credited with an historic prophecy. When he was told at Saidpur about the oppression of Hindus by the Pathan rulers, he sang, "O Lalo, I utter the words as they are revealed unto me by God: With the marriage procession of sin Babar hastens hither and asks for the hand of the bride (our motherland) at the point of the sword." This came true and when Guru Nanak had to suffer at the hands of Babar's men he still sang the glory of God. He was summoned by Babar who asked his forgiveness for his men's misdeeds. Babar pleaded in excuse, "I have come to invade India to release people from the oppression of the Pathans." Once again in a prophetic vein Guru Nanak replied: "You will go the same way, if you oppress your subjects."

For many years, Guru Nanak had played the role of a wandering prophet, gaining converts to his faith and establishing a new religious organization. Only late in life he settled down at Kartarpur on the right bank of the Ravi. When he knew that his end was near, he appointed Bhai Lehna, known as Angad, as his successor. Thus started Sikhism.

Guru Nanak was essentially a man of peace, and he preached love for one's fellowmen as the gateway to the love of God. He felt a religious need that the Hindus and the Muslims should become one. He repudiated the ritualistic aspect of Hinduism but was appreciative of its religious basis. He was evidently much more impressed by Islamic monotheism and its potentiality for creating a brotherhood of man. That is why he succeeded

in gaining followers from Hindus and Muslims alike. It was the glory of Guru Nanak that he showed the path to both Muslims and Hindus to live peacefully as brothers.

Sikhism was a new essay in religion. The Muslim rulers saw in it a challenge to their rule. Hindu *rajas* saw in it a political rival and fought against it as vigorously as the Muslims. But through suffering, Sikhism developed a new zest. From Guru Nanak as the Prophet of Peace and Love to Guru Gobind Singh as the soldier-saint with a flaming sword, albeit in the name of a loving God, was a transformation which is a fascinating study, religiously as well as politically.

No word is more frequently used in the holy Quran than "mercy." Allah is always merciful. It is clear that the Prophet meant his religion to be a religion of peace. But he met with opposition like all other prophets. He had to fly from Mecca and take refuge at Medina. Even there, he was not left in peace and he had to come to the conclusion that if he were to survive and preach his religion, he would have to unsheath the sword. This was done and victory crowned his efforts. It soon developed into an instrument to propagate the new faith. Sassanian Persia was the first to taste the power of the Muslim sword but not without passing on her rich ancient culture to the Arabs and she had her political revenge by dividing the Muslim world into the two warring sects of Sunnis and Shias, a schism which has continued for centuries right down to our own time.

The Sikh Gurus found themselves in the same predicament as prophet Muhammad. In spite of their noble intention to bridge the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims, and to bring them together and in spite of their desire to live in peace, they were persecuted by the Mughals as a menace to Islam. Even the Hindu *rajas* and chiefs saw in the rising power of the Sikh Gurus a challenge to their political existence.

Guru Nanak founded a new religion with the avowed object of bringing the Hindus and the Muslims together to live like brothers. It was the mission of Guru Gobind Singh to organize the religion, so that the Sikhs stood out as a distinct community with its own way of life. He enthroned the *Guru Granth* as the centre of Sikh religion. The Bible and the Quran are holy books, but neither of them had become an object of direct worship. But the *Guru Granth* is more than being merely holy. It has become the object of worship as enshrining the teachings of the Gurus — the Guru Itself.

LIII

RELIGION AND PROGRESS: THE RECORD OF SIKHISM

K. ISHWARN

One of the most popular misconceptions about religion is that it is nothing more than an otherworldly concern — a misconception that has arisen primarily from the experience of Christianity in the West. In the West, there was first a serious discontinuity between the religious and the secular, involving the dominance of the Church, and later, the same discontinuity manifested itself in the process of secularization that can be dated roughly from the fourteenth century. In Asia, and certainly in India, religion and life were interwoven in such a way that organized religion (like the Western Church) did not dominate. In other words, religion, contrary to certain popular misconceptions, has been deeply this-worldly, providing a magnificent cultural backdrop to the process of secular living. Indeed, some of the Western scholars must take some responsibility for perpetuating the myth of the inactive, contemplative East. Both religion and philosophy, down to the day of Mahatma Gandhi, have been action-oriented, ethically biased, and functioning as guides to living. It is in the West that philosophy proved to be a withdrawal from action in the name of a rationalistic epistemology. One should see the rise of Fascism, Marxism or of the current rush of student radicalism in the West, as, to some extent, a questioning of the liberal epistemology of universal rationality. Of course, otherwise there is nothing in common among Fascism, Marxism or student radicalism, except for the fact that they all share the need to displace the sovereignty of theory by the sovereignty of action. Fascism and student radicalism go to the logical extreme, whereas Marxism recognizes the need for a balance between theory and action in its central philosophical notion of proxies. It is one of the ironies of European imperialism that it imposed on societies, which were action-oriented, its ethical or uninvolved action, and later accused them of being passive. It is against this background that one should examine the role of Sikhism in India's progress.

The basic argument of this paper is that, given India's specific historical context, her unique culture, one has to see the role of religion or rather religious culture, as fundamentally progressive, and that sharp opposition between secular progress and religion that characterized the history of

Christianity in the West does not apply to the Indian case. It is with this central assumption in mind that this paper will explore Guru Nanak's contribution to Indian progress. In doing this, it will also refer to the role of Sikhism as one of the most vital and progressive forces in India's development.

We shall begin by examining Guru Nanak's own ideas and his activities. As is well known, Guru Nanak is the founder of Sikhism, a religion that is professed by more than ten millions, primarily concentrated in the Punjab. Historically, Sikhism can be seen as a response to the challenge of Hindu-Muslim conflict in the Indian subcontinent. Guru Nanak brought about a qualitative change in the way Kabir had solved the question of Hindu-Muslim conflict. Guru Nanak retained the mystic-metaphysical part of Kabir's teaching, but he went far beyond it in giving the unity thesis a certain political, secular and social flavour. Indeed, Sikhism, even to this day, in contrast to the minor sect of Dadu-Panthis, remains a political force of profound importance in India.

Guru Nanak who founded the Sikh religion in the fifteenth century was born in a village of the Punjab in which there was considerable interaction between the Hindu and Muslim communities. He had unusual mystic premonitions quite early in life. Here, we do not propose to dwell on the mystic or metaphysical aspects of his teachings, but focus on its social bearings. Guru Nanak, besides emphasizing the role of personal sincerity and devotion, based his teachings on the principle of religious humanism related in a bond of active human service. His faith did not preach withdrawal from life. God was not a static, contemplative concept, but dynamic. He was an optimist to whom God meant love and service to fellow-beings. Finally, God meant responsibility. Because God existed, men were obliged to be good. To seek God was to be good, and this could be done only in a human context.

The strong activist element in Guru Nanak's teaching has made Sikhism a faith of active concern for other human beings. Even God is translated into a practical form in the Sikh concept of "guruship." Dr Sher Singh (cited Khushwant Singh: *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, Princeton, 1963, p. 41, footnote) has suggested that "the belief of unity in the plurality of the *gurus* served as a useful purpose in the development of Sikhism. But for this belief, there would have been no Sikh nation." It is the emphasis on active involvement in man's world here and now that led Sikhism to concern itself seriously with problems of community organization. The *guruship* was a key institution in this approach to organization.

At the social level, Guru Nanak was quite a revolutionary, since he attacked two of the most serious social evils — communalism and casteism. Those who tend to write off religion as essentially conservative would do well to realize that Sikhism began as an active protest movement against the existing social order. By positing a reality beyond the existing caste

order, Guru Nanak gave a basis for the people to seek the ideal of humanistic equality. He said:

What power has caste? It is the reality that is tested. Poison may be held in the hand, but man dieth if he eats it. The sovereignty of the True One is known in every age. He who obeyeth God's order shall become a noble in his court.

In short, God meant, not withdrawal but a call to action, to be involved in the problems of other human beings. While it is true that Guru Nanak himself (how could he, given the achievements he actually made, do everything?) did not spend any time on organizational problems, yet his teachings contained the seeds of a future organizational system. He did devote some attention to the problem of appointing his successor-Guru, and that was an organizational problem. It was his ability to solve this problem that gave the Sikh community a genuine basis for growth.

If we leave Guru Nanak aside, and look at the years immediately following him, we see that Sikhism successfully faced up to the challenge of survival. The four Gurus who followed Guru Nanak, Guru Angad (1539-1552), Guru Amar Das (1552-1574), Guru Ram Das (1574-1581), and Guru Arjun (1581-1606) laid down firmly the foundations on which the Sikh community could grow. A brief look at what they did should underline the organizational abilities of the Sikh religion. Guru Angad gave the community a distinct script of its own and developed the *langar* institution of the open and free people's kitchen. Guru Amar Das further strengthened the institutional structure of the Sikh community. It was he who prevented the growth of asceticism and otherworldliness within the community. The ascetic element of the *udasis* was separated from the main community, and these followed Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's elder son. The *langar* became even more important in building up a sense of community solidarity. It certainly reduced the strength of the caste ties through the simple but effective idea of a common meal. He also built the first centre of Sikh pilgrimage—the great stepped-well at Goindwal. He saw to it that the community met at least three days in a year. He gave the Sikhs their own distinctive system of rituals for marriage and funerals, and he discouraged the social evils of *sati* and alcoholism. The creed became so popular that there were many converts from the Hindu and Muslim communities. Organizationally, Guru Amar Das established 22 *manjis* or circles, each under a devoted Sikh. These were the centres of common worship and propagation.

Guru Ram Das founded Amritsar, the Mecca of the Sikhs. This involved a vigorous organizational drive for collecting funds and support. His successor, Guru Arjun, was responsible for the completion of the great Sikh Scripture, the *Guru Granth*. The book further gave the community a common focal point, and symbolic unity. Under Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708), the community resisted the tyranny and absolutism of

the Mughals. It was Guru Gobind Singh who inaugurated the *Khalsa*, the sword brotherhood of the Sikhs. This involved an elaborate initiation ceremony that was characterized by five marks — especially, the uncut hair, the taking of the name of Singh, drinking from a common bowl of baptismal nectar without caste distinctions. It was during Guru Gobind Singh's time that Sikhism fully flowered into a faith based on the principles of the *guruship* of the *Granth Sahib* (the Holy Book), and the brotherhood of the Sikhs.

Each of the above elements implied that Sikhism was moving towards a humanistic ideal. The *guruship* emphasized the ideal of a human teacher as against the concept of incarnation. The book involved an active concern for right living, and the brotherhood emphasized human equality and solidarity.

We now go back to the thesis we advanced at the start of this paper. It is that religion and change are not essentially opposed and that religion is not opposed to social or political activism, especially in India. Mahatma Gandhi talked in religious terms, and his success lay in using India's religious culture for political or social purposes. The impressive record of the Sikhs of Guru Nanak is an ample proof, if any proof is needed, that religion can be a source of change and progress, and a solid basis for organized social and political community life.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUCTURAL STUDY OF JAPUJI

HARJEET SINGH GILL

Until the advent of social sciences and more specifically of structural linguistics, the study of modern religions or languages was nothing but an appendix to the study of the so-called classical religions or languages. It was presumed that the fundamental or even universal type-structure was already given in a religion like Hinduism, Christianity or Islam or a language like Sanskrit, Greek or Latin. The structural autonomy of a modern language or religion was scientifically posited only after the basic distinction between synchrony and diachrony was established and the historical progression was explained in terms of the dynamics of the correlated conceptual oppositions of a given ethno-linguistic or metaphysical structure.

The etymological approach of going back to the so-called original meanings ignores the new semantic oppositions and relationships. The significance of elements in a given structure is determined by the way they are arranged ; when the order changes, the significance changes with it. For example, derivations of words or comparative studies of isolated concepts of *Japuji* with some other sacred text does not tell us anything about the over-all metaphysical significance of this composition. It is only the study of the interrelationships of the epithets for God in the Mulmantra and the pattern of correlation and oppositional network of the thirty-eight steps of *Japuji* which are radically different from any other comparable semantic structure anywhere that would lead us to its proper comprehension.

In this paper, I have tried to show the uniqueness of some of the basic relational oppositions in *Japuji* and the way they are structured to present an entirely new metaphysical signification both in Expression and Content. As the title reads, this paper is only an introduction to the structural study of *Japuji*, a more detailed analysis will follow later.

The oppositional network may be summarized as follows:

MULMANTRA

+ ik /- anek
+ sat /- asat

- + kartā /- kitā
- nirbhau /- nirwair
- + akāl /- kāl
- + ajuni /- junan wich
- + saibhang /- a-saibhang
- + Unity /- Diversity
- + Truth /- Falsehood (non-truth)
- + Creator /- Created
- Without Fear /- Without Vengeance
- + Timeless /- Time-bound (limited)
- + Not Begotten /- Begotten
- + Of His Own Being /- Not of His Own Being

The Thirty-eight Steps

To be true and to break the Wall of Falsehood/To follow the Will of God -- To comprehend the Will of God -- 1

Prayer / Will of God -- 3

Love / Devotion -- 4

True / Pure / Self-sustained -- 5

The Word of Guru / Heavenly Music -- 5

The Word of Guru / Scriptures -- 5

The Will of God / Pilgrimage -- 6

God's Grace / Sinfulness -- 7

The Communion -- The inner listening / Destruction of sorrow and sin -- 8, 9, 10, 11

The Communion / The Faith -- 12, 13, 14

Truth Realized / Saved -- 15

Wonderful and Countless Creations / Comprehension of the Will of God -- 16, 17, 18, 19

Sin / Love -- 20

The Knowledge of the Timelessness and the Infinity of Creations / Limited understanding, ignorance -- 21, 22, 23, 24

Lord the Giver / Adoration -- 25

Infinity of God's Manifestations / Traditional limited and conditional descriptions -- 26

All possible descriptions of God's Abode and Actions / Greatness through Manifestation -- 27

Begging / Contentment, Modesty -- 28

Ashes on body / Meditation -- 28

Beggar's rags / Contemplation on Death -- 28

Yoga / Chastity, Faith, Brotherhood, Submission -- 28

Food / Knowledge of God -- 29

Listening / Divine Music -- 29

Separation / Union (Will) - - 29

Creation- Sustaining- Destruction / Will of God - - 30

Bride / Bridegroom (Union) - - 32

Dharma- Actions / Grace - - 34

Knowledge- Secular / Sublimity - - 35

Realm of Spiritual endeavour / Beauty, Form, Order - - 36

Realm of Grace / Spiritual communion - - 37

Realm of Truth / Beatitude and Grace - - 37

The Mint of Truth

Goldsmith / Patience

Hammer / Knowledge

Bellows / Fear

Fire / Austerities

Crucible / Love

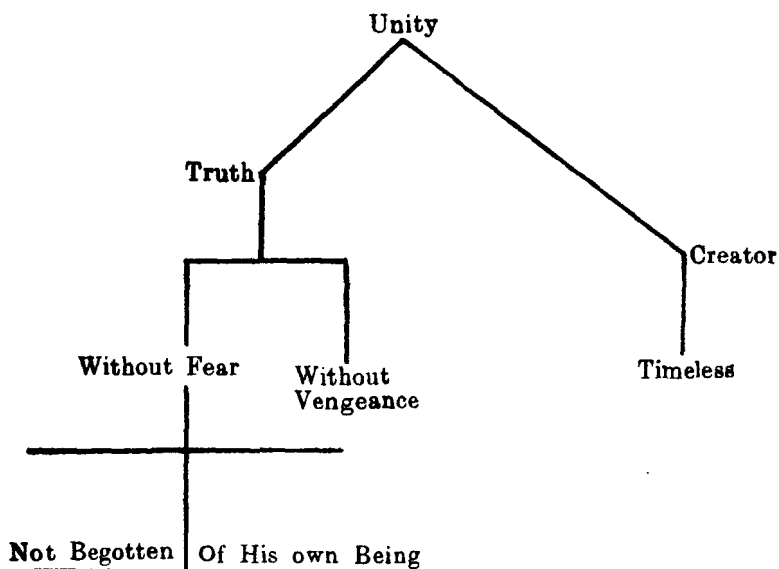
Spiritual Happiness / Divine Smile, Divine Grace

Meditation and Communion / Liberty and Peace

Before deriving any conclusions from this conceptual network, it will be necessary to understand the basic principles of related oppositions. In very simple terms, only those concepts can be considered to oppose each other which have a mutual underlying rapport. For example, in the *Mulmantra* *ik, sat, kartā, akāl, ajuni, saibhang* etc. are positive assertions which automatically exclude their opposites *anek, asat, kāl, jūnan wich, a-saibhang*. The second system of oppositions especially as presented in the *Japuji* may be called "complementary," as for example, the problem of how to be true and to break the Wall of Falsehood is complemented by positive response of comprehension of the Will of God. Or, for example, the "Truth Realized" is complemented by "Saved." One of the most important conceptual oppositions of the *Japuji* is Action / Grace.

When we go through this systematic and correlated oppositional system, we understand that the concepts of Unity, Truth, Action, Grace, Devotion etc. have semantic ranges diametrically opposed to the corresponding concepts in the traditional Hindu philosophy, more specifically in the Gita and Bhakti or Sufi ideals of Love and Devotion. This structure of conceptual oppositions may be briefly stated as follows:

THE BASIC TENETS



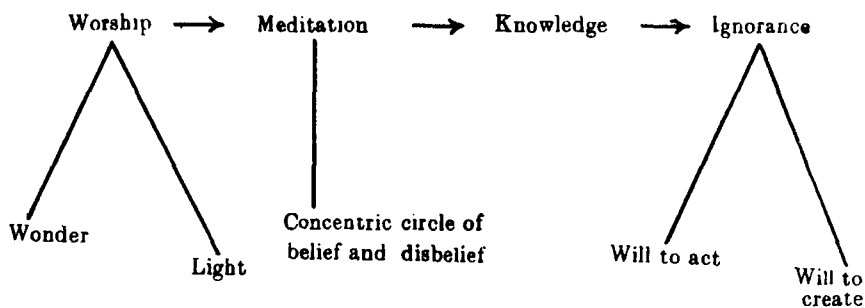
THE FUNDAMENTAL PROCESS

Will $\leftarrow$
 $\rightarrow$ Meditation

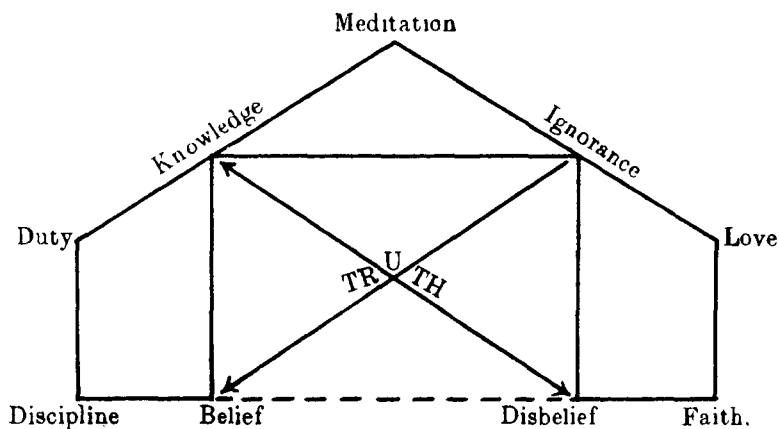
To Know
 To Believe
 To Be

$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{To Know} \\ \text{To Believe} \\ \text{To Be} \end{array} \right\} \equiv \text{Unity} \longrightarrow \text{Diversity} \longrightarrow \text{Sacrifice}$

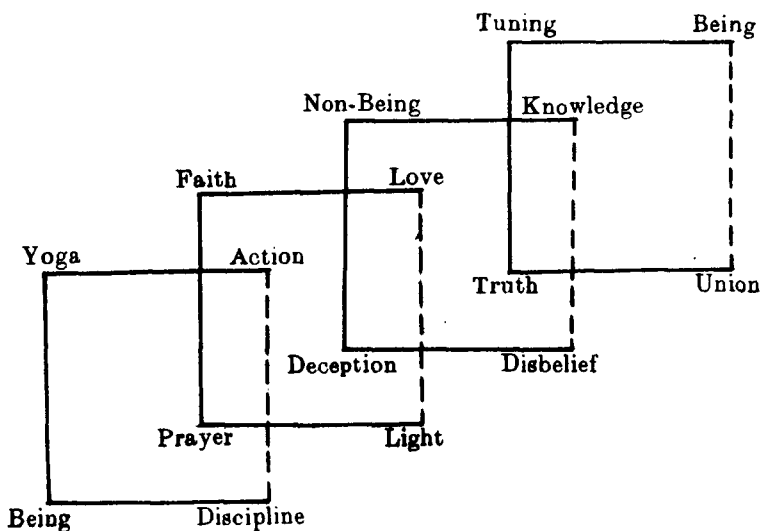
THE SECOND PROGRESSION



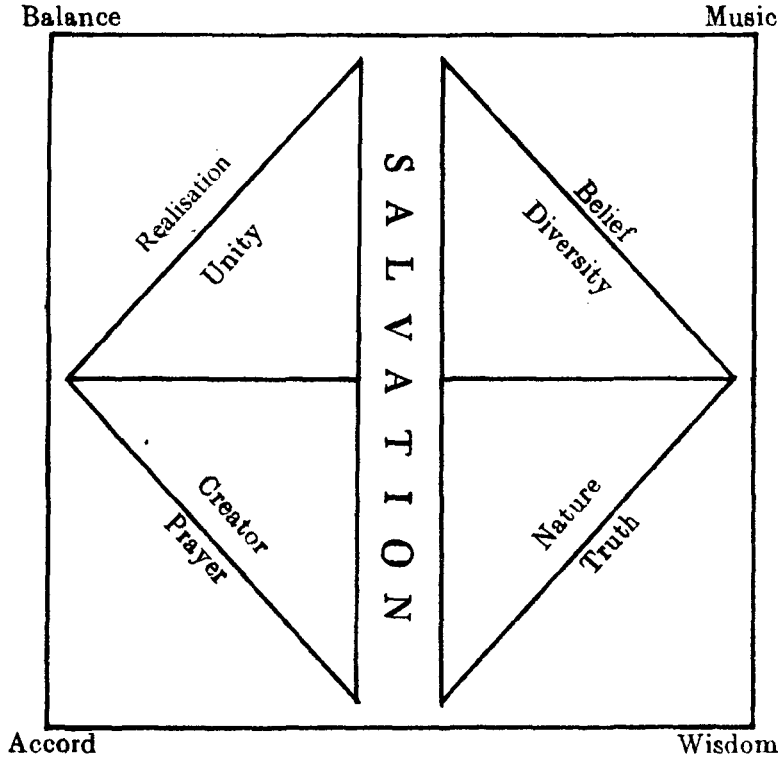
THE THIRD PROGRESSION



THE FOURTH PROGRESSION



THE FIFTH PROGRESSION



To conclude, we can state that these fundamental concepts presented in the *Japuji* are positive and directional. The Yoga in the *Japuji* presents the new oppositions of Begging/Contentment, Ashes on body/Meditation, Beggar's rags/Contemplation, Food/Knowledge of God, Listening/Divine Music, Separation/Union (Will of God) etc. This transformation is most evident from the concluding lines where Guru Nanak puts his disciples through the Mint of Truth with the relational oppositions of Goldsmith/Patience, Hammer/Knowledge, Bellows/Fear, Fire/Austerities, Crucible/Love and finally, Spiritual Happiness/Divine Grace. There is no traditional Indian fusion of "Sat and Asat," "Existence and non-Existence," "Truth and non-Truth," "Action and non-Action."

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INDEX

- Abraham, 113, 114, 244
 Absolute, 49, 53, 57, 58, 77-81, 87, 91,
 94, 98, 101, 102, 104, 120, 138, 180,
 182, 232, 234, 235, 237, 240, 244-247,
 254, 263, 266, 322, 445
 Achal Batala, 143, 271
 Acharya, Swami Anand, 404, 405
 Adi Nath, 269, 273, 299
 Adi Siva, 299
 Adonai, 111
 Advaita, 12, 78, 83, 86, 87, 91, 168,
 237, 243-246, 250, 286
 Agamas, 79, 80, 128, 275
 Agni, 64
 Agnosticism, 10, 168
 Ahalya, 264
 Ahankara, 48, 276
 Ahimsa, 498
 Ajuni, 105, 242, 473, 485, 486, 529, 530
 Akal, 78, 105, 107, 108, 132, 133, 240,
 298, 311, 334, 417, 485, 486, 529, 530
 Akbar, 331, 421, 443, 465
 Akshara, 107, 235, 266
 Al-Biruni, 54, 298
 Allah, 3, 19, 24, 200, 202, 204, 206,
 241, 409, 417, 418, 439, 474
 Amrita, 21, 64, 66, 67, 76, 235, 248-250,
 253, 268, 334, 420
 Amritsar, 27, 139, 331, 332, 465, 514, 526
 Amos, 89
 Amsavatara, 88
 Anahad Sabad, 58, 59, 66-68, 80, 141,
 306, 477
 Anandpur Sahib, 17, 332-334, 507
 Anhata-nada, 297
 Animism, 338
 Aquinas, Thomas, 86
 Archer, John Clark, 42, 44, 398, 406
 Aristotle, 189, 448
 Arjuna, 88, 178, 199
 Arya Asanga, 49
 Aryans, 136, 233
 Arya Samaj, 341
 Asceticism, 302, 459, 471, 489, 510, 511
 Asrama, 465, 509
 Asur-sanghar, 238, 263
 Atma, 51, 58, 59, 66-68, 80, 141, 306,
 477
 Atonement, 361
 Attar, Farid-al-Din, 195, 199
 Aum, 109
 Aurangzeb, 329, 333, 334
 Avadhutas, 269, 270, 278, 282
 Avatara, 69, 87-89, 107, 294, 298, 392,
 473, 474, 497, 499, 500
 Avidya, 78, 245, 428
 Baba Bakala, 332
 Babar, 17, 28, 146, 261, 328-330, 337,
 422, 443, 449, 466, 467, 469, 522
 Babar-vani, 28, 213, 261, 330, 383, 390,
 467
 Bachitra Natak, 469
 Badarayana, 45
 Baghdad, 139, 212, 213
 Baisakhi, 331, 334
 Bakhshish, 214
 Balban, 466
 Balwand, 26, 402
 Bang-i-dara, 295
 Bani, 242, 269, 279, 290, 382, 386, 484,
 487
 Banwari, 240
 Batuta, Ibn, 270
 Bein River, 90, 369, 399, 482, 483, 488
 Bengal, 60, 139, 197, 514-516
 Beni, 214
 Bergson, Henri, 95
 Bhagavada-Gita, 46, 47, 72, 87, 88, 129,
 178, 310, 413, 462
 Bhago, Malik, 23, 370, 410
 Bhai Bala, 18, 419, 516
 Bhai Dit Singh, 362
 Bhai Gurdas, 16, 24, 26, 29, 143, 256,
 262, 270-272, 296, 298, 308, 331, 392,
 401, 403, 470, 472, 478, 479
 Bhai Gurmukh Singh, 362
 Bhai Jetha, 331
 Bhai Jodh Singh, 90, 290, 291
 Bhai Mani Singh, 308
 Bhai Nand Lal Goya, 47
 Bhai Vir Singh, 405
 Bhakti, 42, 69, 87-90, 99, 125, 162, 179,
 198, 199, 246, 250, 254, 267, 313,
 317, 338, 341, 378, 383, 452, 473, 475,
 476, 490, 496, 497, 530
 Bhakti movement, 60, 69, 138, 141, 145
 Bhangar Nath, 143
 Bharthari Nath, 269, 273, 280
 Bhattas, 305
 Bhikshu, Bhadant Santi, 274
 Bhoomia, 330
 Bibhikhan, 265
 Bibi Bhani, 465
 Bible, 132, 357, 358, 382, 451, 456, 458,
 460, 523

- Bilashya Nath, 273
 Bistami, Shaikh Bayazid, 192, 199
 Bodhicitta, 65
 Bodhisattvas, 274, 289
 Bondage, 74
 Brahma, 51, 52, 73, 100, 133, 138-140, 199, 206, 209, 234-238, 243, 244, 264, 265, 294, 473, 474, 487
 Brahman, 72, 73, 77-80, 84, 98, 105-109, 119, 120, 126, 182, 235, 275, 279, 286, 290, 358, 384, 401, 414, 490, 495, 504, 505, 510
 Brahmanism, 310, 327, 475
 Brahmasutra, 45, 490
 Brahmo Samaj, 461, 514
 Brotherhood of man, 134, 153, 231, 311, 314, 393, 408, 409, 418, 420, 522
 Buber, Martin, 91
 Buddhi, 48, 276
 Buddhism, 3, 49, 59, 65, 78, 125, 164, 188, 226, 256, 272, 288-291, 297, 302, 304, 306, 327, 338, 339, 342, 417, 475
 Mahayana Buddhism, 65, 78, 289, 301, 342
 Theravada Buddhism, 168, 338, 342
 Zen Buddhism, 304
 Tantrayana school of Buddhism, 49
 Vajrayana school of Buddhism, 49, 51
 Buddhist, 22, 50-52, 59, 61-67, 76, 82, 170, 194, 199, 272, 274, 286, 288, 326, 337, 339, 340, 342, 345, 460, 505, 516
 Bukhari, Jalal-ud-Din, 99, 214
 Bukhari, Shaikh Farid, 422
 Bukhari, Shaikh Ismail, 99
 Bultmann, Rudolf, 364-366, 371, 379
 Burrow, T., 71
 Calvin, 447
 Canaanites, 84
 Catholic Church, 345, 456, 458
 Catholicism, 452
 Ceylon, 4, 337, 339, 342, 345, 400
 Chaitanya, 338, 379
 Charpat Nath, 269, 273, 282
 Chauthapad, 58, 306
 Chicago, 166
 Chishti, Khwaja Muin-al-Din, 154, 196, 199, 211, 295
 Christ, 85, 110, 113, 115, 116, 164, 167, 171, 361, 362, 366, 369, 382, 454, 456, 460, 461, 483
 Christ of faith, 361, 362, 366
 Christian, 31, 38, 59, 85, 89, 111-113, 128, 129, 132, 140, 165-168, 176, 192, 194, 197, 199, 329, 338, 339, 340, 345, 354, 361, 366, 369, 421, 459-462, 477
 Christianity, 3, 101, 110, 111, 113, 167, 168, 181, 267, 293, 322, 343, 345, 357, 361-363, 368, 371, 379, 417, 453, 454, 460, 461, 463, 524, 525, 528
 Colebrooke, H.T., 360
 Comparative Religion, 293
 Confucianism, 338
 Confucians, 345
 Consciousness, 9, 31-33, 47-49, 58, 61, 80, 93-96, 106, 113, 121, 127, 156, 158, 172, 173, 175, 176, 180, 209, 250, 306, 417
 Divine consciousness, 93-95
 Intellectual consciousness, 173, 177
 Introvertive consciousness, 176
 Mystic consciousness, 173, 176, 177, 182, 187, 189
 Normal consciousness, 186
 Pure consciousness, 49, 52, 106, 176, 179
 Religious consciousness, 96
 Super consciousness, 304
 Transcendent consciousness, 180
 Unitary consciousness, 177
 Consubstantiation, 456
 Cosmology, 236
 Cosmos, 8, 53, 237, 352, 490
 Creation, 19, 37, 38, 41, 53, 64, 71-73, 78, 81, 85, 89, 91, 99-101, 103, 106-109, 120, 121, 133, 138, 155, 157, 163, 170, 171, 185, 206, 208, 236-238, 257, 264, 265, 268, 275, 299, 300, 315, 321, 385, 387, 416, 429, 486, 499, 529, 530
 Cunningham, J.D., 150, 406, 460, 470
 Cusanus, Nicolas, 94
 Dabistan-i-Mazahib, 26, 293, 295, 405, 419, 421, 423
 Dadu, 60-63, 65, 66, 507
 Dalai Lama, 338
 Damodar, 107, 240
 Dana, 122, 471, 478
 Darbar, 241
 Darwin, 165
 Dasam duar, 58, 65-68, 280, 297, 306
 Dasgupta, Surendranath, 88
 Dhammapada, 290, 291
 Dhanna, 214
 Dharma, 88, 141, 158, 159, 225, 227, 230, 260, 267, 270, 274, 289, 300, 375, 376, 417, 509, 530
 Dharma Kaya, 65, 115
 Dharmaparkramabahu, 326
 Dissolution, 300
 Divine:
 Divine Being, 305
 Divine Grace, 242, 243, 249, 253, 255-257, 355, 490, 491, 530, 533
 Divine Justice, 238
 Divine Light, 247
 Divine Love, 246, 300, 311
 Divine Music, 297, 301, 529, 533
 Divine Name, 297, 303
 Divine Order, 69, 134, 467
 Divine Ordinance, 255, 256, 258
 Divine Power, 261
 Divine Presence, 248
 Divine Spirit, 409
 Divine Spouse, 246
 Divine Will, 261, 300, 432
 Divine Word, 301, 303
 Dogma, 9, 46, 319, 456, 463
 Dualism, 46-48, 50, 52, 475
 Duality, 244, 249, 252, 267, 475
 Durga, 234
 Dvaita, 51, 86, 91, 244
 Eckhart, Meister, 54, 93, 94, 176
 Eclectic, 241

- Ecumenical Movement, 345
 Efficient Cause, 107
 Egalitarian, 227
 Ego, 67, 69, 74, 104, 156, 209, 244, 283, 316, 386, 397, 417, 429, 441, 488
 Ek-Oankar, 242
 Eliade, Mircea, 308
 Emancipation, 141, 245, 256, 257, 507, 512
 Empiricism, 50
 Epic, 238
 Epistemology, 95, 524
 Escapism, 301, 303
 Essence, 245
 Eternal, 53, 73, 101, 102, 106, 120, 131, 133, 138, 151, 159, 178, 180, 206, 234, 235, 238-242, 245-249, 251, 252, 254, 257-259, 265, 310, 314, 380, 383, 417
 Ethics, 158
 Eucharist, 456
 Evil, 74, 116, 123, 128, 165, 178, 183, 185, 236, 248, 250, 253, 258, 262, 283, 312, 316, 330, 334, 386, 398, 450, 452, 456, 458, 462
 Fani, Muhsin, 293-295, 405
 Farid-al-Din Ganj-i-Shakar, Shaikh, 24, 27, 99, 137, 154, 197, 198, 212, 214, 266, 383, 452
 Fascism, 524
 Finite, 93, 94, 101, 104, 182
 Five Khands, 57, 69, 134
 Five Symbols, 507-509
 Gangohi, Shaikh Abd-al-Quddus, 200, 204, 208, 213
 Gardezi, Shaikh Muhammad, 24
 Gautama Buddha, 289
 Gehni Nath, 273
 Ghazali, 193, 203, 207
 Gita, 88, 258, 259, 261, 382, 489, 490, 530
 God:
 God as Absolute, 57, 80, 84
 God as Almighty, 393
 God as Controller, 50-53
 God as Creator, 21, 48, 50, 52, 53, 84, 88, 100, 102, 112, 113, 120, 123, 239, 250, 297, 314, 315, 339, 414, 418, 471
 God as Deathless, 85, 414
 God as Destroyer, 84, 123, 297, 314
 God as Enjoyer, 414
 God as Eternal, 85, 102
 God as Formless, 86, 122, 123, 141, 314, 500
 God as Governor, 414
 God as Immanent, 52, 53, 99, 112, 122, 123, 203
 God as Impersonal, 80
 God as Incomprehensible, 85
 God as Inaccessible, 102, 112
 God as Ineffable, 90
 God as Infinite, 112, 144
 God as Knower, 53
 God as Merciful, 112-114, 123
 God as Omnipotent, 95, 112, 314
 God as Omnipresent, 40, 314
 God as Omniscient, 314
 God as Pure Consciousness, 52
 God as Sustainer, 53, 84, 88
 God as Timeless, 414
 God as Transcendent, 52, 53, 84, 86, 99, 112, 123, 203
 God as Truth, 138, 304, 339, 387, 418, 487
 God as Ultimate, 57, 68
 God as Unborn, 85, 88, 112, 414, 418, 499
 God as Unsearchable, 90
 Concept of God, 88, 254, 299, 473, 490
 Court of God, 130, 309, 474
 Descent of God, 491
 Doctrine of God, 123
 Existence of God, 48, 241, 298
 Fatherhood of God, 393, 408, 409, 418, 420
 Form of God, 317
 Glory of God, 316, 319
 Grace of God, 316, 320, 416, 470, 491
 Greatness of God, 69
 Idea of God, 240, 490
 Knowledge of God, 90, 169, 238, 369, 416, 497, 500, 529, 533
 Light of God, 304, 445
 Love of God, 90, 130, 249, 257, 258, 280, 300, 311, 318, 320, 369, 415, 417, 522
 Manifestation of God, 473
 Message of God, 196, 331
 Name of God, 40, 67, 76, 88, 104, 107, 110, 111, 124, 128, 132, 138, 199, 205, 249, 285, 312, 317, 395, 397, 417, 424, 439, 491
 Nature of God, 83, 87, 88
 Oneness of God, 294, 397
 Realization of God, 485, 487
 Revelation of God, 85, 89, 128, 167, 416
 Spirit of God, 117, 306
 Sovereignty of God, 41
 Truth of God, 90, 304, 339, 370, 387, 418, 487
 Unitariness of God, 69
 Unity of God, 83, 86, 98, 102, 134, 153, 163, 204, 216, 314, 418, 473, 478
 Vision of God, 416
 Voice of God, 90, 129, 369, 433
 Will of God, 36, 39, 40, 101, 117, 300, 332, 411, 473, 529, 530, 533
 Word of God, 67, 69, 80, 89, 90, 100, 111, 456, 529
 Communion with God, 21, 463
 Union with God, 89, 103, 132, 176, 183, 306, 453, 478
 God-incarnate, 393, 396, 398
 God-realization, 310, 312, 316, 317, 386
 Golden Temple, 27, 139, 332, 427, 514
 Gopal, 240, 474
 Gopi Chand, 269, 273
 Gorakh Nath, 115, 198, 214, 269, 273, 275, 277, 279-281, 477, 498, 506
 Grace, 21, 23, 37, 38, 57, 89-91, 102, 103, 106, 110, 114, 117, 123, 125, 133, 134, 138, 153, 163, 170, 182, 201, 202, 206, 208, 242, 243, 251, 256, 257, 274, 280, 281, 284, 289, 305, 312, 317, 320, 323

- 355, 369, 370, 386-388, 415-417, 429, 430, 433, 442, 454, 455, 478, 487, 491, 499, 500, 529, 530
- Gunas, 48, 58, 134, 283, 315, 316, 319
- Rajas, 58, 276, 315, 316, 486
- Satva, 58, 315, 316, 486
- Tamas, 58, 276, 315, 316, 486
- Gurmukh, 157, 207
- Gur-sabad, 89
- Guru:
- as God, 129, 369, 478
 - as Sabad, 129
 - as Spiritual Guide, 126, 129, 130
 - as Truth of God, 478
 - as Voice of God, 478
 - as Word of God, 90, 133, 478
 - Concept of Guru, 124, 491
 - Word of Guru, 231, 272, 280, 284, 285, 529
- Guru Amar Dass, 26, 27, 330, 331, 465, 471, 526
- Guru Angad, 26, 27, 156, 161, 313, 330, 370, 471, 479, 480, 526
- Guru Arjun Dev, 26, 27, 85, 139, 140, 212, 239, 294, 331, 332, 369, 382, 392, 402, 421-423, 484, 526
- Guru Gobind Singh, 3, 15, 17, 27, 28, 47, 130, 140, 228, 289, 298, 333-335, 369, 370, 373, 420, 424, 443, 462, 467, 468, 470, 479, 507, 509, 516, 517, 519, 520, 523, 526, 527
- Guru Hargobind, 26, 27, 140, 305, 332, 419, 423, 424
- Guru Harkrishan, 27, 332
- Guru Har Rai, 6, 419
- Guru Ram Das, 26, 27, 256, 331, 526
- Guru Tegh Bahadur, 27, 28, 332-334
- Gurubani, 45, 80, 81, 299, 311
- Gurumantras, 506, 507, 517
- Gurumati, 289
- Hamid-al-Din Nagauri, Shaikh, 210
- Hari, 235, 240, 277, 474
- Hari Singh Nalwa, 335
- Harmandar, 27, 231
- Harnaksha, 239
- Haumai, 67, 68, 74, 128, 132, 156, 157, 386, 478
- Hawan, 506
- Hebrews, 84, 88, 111
- Henotheism, 86, 235
- Hindu, 3, 4, 12, 16, 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 54, 98, 115, 125, 128, 130, 134, 137-140, 143, 151, 153, 154, 162, 167, 168, 170, 200, 201, 205, 216, 224, 225, 227-232, 234, 240-243, 266, 292-294, 310-312, 314, 323, 324, 328-330, 333-335, 338-341, 345, 357, 392, 400, 402, 403, 407, 408, 412, 418, 420-422, 437, 439, 441, 443, 448-450, 452, 453, 457, 459-462, 465, 468, 469, 471, 472, 474, 475, 479, 484, 485, 488, 497, 498, 500, 505, 509, 510, 521-523, 525, 526
- Hinduism, 2, 59, 100, 124, 125, 128, 134, 135, 136, 167, 201, 224, 227-230, 232, 233, 242, 256, 258, 293, 294, 311, 341, 342, 357, 417, 420, 436, 438, 447, 452, 459, 461, 462, 475, 477, 479, 485, 489, 504, 509, 510, 512, 521, 522, 528
- Hindu Trinity, 234, 237, 473
- Hobbes, 186
- Hukam, 69, 73, 132, 134, 142, 144, 207, 241, 290, 300, 386, 467
- Humanism, 152, 224, 228, 260, 450, 525
- Humanist, 240, 519
- Humayur, 466
- Ibrahim, Shaikh, 24, 99, 137, 452
- Idealism, 416
- Ignorance, 12, 74, 90, 99, 101, 107, 120, 124, 128, 170, 183, 241, 245, 247, 250, 253, 260, 271, 276, 300, 330, 453, 462
- Illusion, 36, 71, 73, 74, 78, 86, 91, 106, 127, 131, 144, 182, 189, 231, 232, 236, 244-246, 250, 252, 278, 285, 317, 441
- Immanence, 37, 60, 73, 121, 393
- Incarnation, 60, 69, 89, 103, 107, 129, 181, 203, 209, 230, 234, 235, 241, 244, 251, 261, 279, 294, 351, 392, 394, 397, 499, 527
- Indra, 106, 138, 139, 199, 264
- Indus Valley, 136, 138
- Infinite, 53, 90, 93, 94, 98-100, 103, 104, 106, 107, 122, 130, 133, 156, 165, 182, 201, 247, 251, 252, 305, 315, 383, 385, 394, 416
- Introvert, 238
- Iqbal, 294, 295
- Iraqi, Shaikh Fakhr-al-Din, 208, 211
- Isaac, 113
- Isaiah, 89, 111
- Islam, 3, 12, 28, 59, 85, 99, 101, 102, 124, 132, 133, 136, 191, 192, 199, 201, 228, 230, 240, 244, 267, 293, 294, 311, 322, 328, 333, 338, 339, 341, 342, 357, 404, 417, 422, 435, 438-440, 447, 450, 451, 469, 474-476, 479, 485, 489, 512, 521, 523, 528
- Israel, 342
- Isvara, 87, 91, 109, 235, 254, 298, 299, 414
- Jacob, 113
- Jafri, Kamal-al-Din, 197
- Jagan Nath, 240
- Jahaniyan, Makhdum, 99
- Jaidev, 214
- Jainism, 51, 59, 125, 226, 272
- Jalandhar Nath, 273
- James, William, 172
- Janamsakhis, 16-19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 130, 153, 211-216, 245, 266, 361, 363, 364, 366, 368-370, 372, 374, 377, 382, 403, 467, 482-484, 487
- Janamsakhi, Bala, 18, 29, 372, 405
- Janamsakhi, Bhai Mani Singh, 18
- Janamsakhi, Meharban, 18, 29, 288
- Janamsakhi, Puratan, 18, 29, 245, 266, 288, 372, 405, 406, 472
- Jarasandha, 239
- Jesus Christ, 310, 361, 452, 455, 460
- Jesus of History, 361, 362, 364, 366
- Jews, 192, 342, 345

- Jilani, Abd-al-Qadir, 93, 213
 Jiva, 105, 123, 276
 Juana, 125, 178
 Joan of Arc, 172
 John, 111, 180
 Judaism, 101, 133, 267, 310, 342, 343, 357, 367, 379
 Kaaba, 139, 168, 192, 197, 214, 215, 516
 Kabir, 27, 57, 59-69, 126, 129, 132, 134, 141-143, 145, 200, 214, 216, 256, 302, 383, 420, 452, 454, 469, 476, 479, 515, 525
 Kaki, Shaikh Qutb-al-Din Bakhtiyar, 198, 212
 Kali-yuga, 236, 270, 376
 Kama, 128, 267
 Kamsa, 239, 265, 268, 398
 Kamrup, 298, 385
 Karma, 12, 12, 88, 102, 106, 113, 124, 125, 141, 178, 204, 230, 258, 278, 315, 386, 431, 432, 456, 478
 Karta Purakh, 105, 108, 237, 242, 266, 313, 485, 486
 Kartar, 235, 243, 396, 397
 Kartarpur, 25, 139, 162, 330, 397, 401, 402, 412, 457, 465, 479, 522
 Khalsa, 140, 420, 424, 425, 427, 527
 Khands, 57, 58, 78, 316
 Khuda, 241, 474
 Krishna, 239, 240, 261, 266-268, 286, 305, 338, 397, 418, 473, 494, 495, 498, 499
 Kundalini, 131, 243, 297, 301
 Kurukshetra, 37, 38, 385
 Lakshmi, 234, 244, 399
 Lalo, 22, 23, 410, 522
 Langar, 12, 25, 194, 290, 311, 330, 331, 425, 471, 526
 Lankavatasutra, 50
 Lehna, 25, 26, 216, 313, 402, 419, 477, 516, 522
 Liberation, 32, 45, 101, 233, 265, 267, 290, 299, 302, 303, 314, 316, 351, 415, 519
 Light, 102, 103, 106, 107, 110, 127-130, 252, 278, 283, 409
 Lila, 105, 108, 120, 496, 498, 501
 Lobha, 128
 Logos, 100, 110, 132, 382, 387
 Lohari-Pa., 269, 282, 303
 Luther, Martin, 339, 447, 450-452, 454-460, 463
 Macauliffe, M.A., 289, 291, 360, 445, 446, 460, 464, 472, 476, 480, 481, 493, 501, 513
 Machhindra Nath, 269, 273, 275, 277, 498, 506
 Mahabharata, 84, 88, 233, 244
 Mahatma Gandhi, 10, 13, 311, 341, 427-524, 527
 Mahesha, 236, 264
 Manifestation, 39, 67, 71, 73, 74, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 84, 91, 107, 108, 111, 120, 123, 132, 155, 234, 274, 315, 499, 529
 Manmukh, 128, 157
 Mantras, 82, 270, 273, 314, 484, 506
 Mardana, 22, 23, 37, 43, 400, 419, 516, 521
 Marxism, 524
 Masand, 331, 420
 Matter, 72, 105, 108, 120, 121-123, 245
 Maya, 70, 72-75, 78, 79, 86, 91, 106, 108, 109, 127, 128, 156, 157, 182, 206, 231, 244, 245, 247, 248, 253, 266, 267, 276, 278, 283, 285, 315, 428, 474, 478, 487, 490
 McLeod, W.H., 212, 215, 216, 358, 360, 364, 365, 371, 374, 376, 377, 406, 480, 481, 501
 Mecca, 27, 41, 139, 168, 193, 212, 215, 216, 339, 345, 440, 516, 526
 Medieval India, 27, 57, 73, 238, 292, 477
 Medina, 212
 Mehta, Kalu Chaud, 18, 20, 21, 328, 398
 Metaphysical, 50, 228, 229, 234, 244, 288, 298, 300, 306, 314, 364, 365, 383, 385, 416, 525, 528
 Mimamsa, 51
 Mir-Mukand, 266
 Moha, 128, 266, 277
 Mohan, 240
 Moksa, 51, 225, 252, 267
 Mongols, 136
 Monism, 237, 241, 244-246, 475
 Monotheism, 86, 112, 122, 133, 203, 241, 244, 326, 358, 416, 515, 522
 Moses, 111, 113, 116, 196, 205, 183
 Mount Sumeru, 61, 214, 477
 Muhammad, 294, 523
 Muhammad-bin-Tughluq, 466
 Mukti, 141, 225, 235, 245, 252, 302, 316, 320
 Mul-Mantra, 51, 105, 109, 133, 242, 245, 357, 358, 386, 414, 424, 485, 528, 530
 Murari, 107, 199, 210
 Muslim, 3, 16, 19, 21-23, 25, 27, 28, 115, 130, 134, 137-140, 142, 153, 154, 162, 168, 170, 180, 181, 193-195, 198, 200, 204, 205, 207, 216, 224, 227, 229-232, 240, 241, 243, 252, 266, 280, 292-294, 311, 314, 324, 328, 329, 331-334, 338, 340, 342, 345, 392, 397, 399, 400, 402, 403, 408, 412, 420-422, 424, 436-441, 448, 449, 452, 454, 459, 460, 468, 469, 474-476, 479, 488, 508, 516, 521, 523, 525, 526
 Mystery, 100, 112, 155, 172, 201, 205, 243, 257, 258, 299, 306, 509
 Mystic, 27, 58, 59, 66, 69, 80, 82, 91, 94, 99, 131, 134, 142, 145, 154, 172-178, 180-184, 188, 197, 201, 205, 238, 304, 305, 313, 320, 357, 358, 384, 389, 409, 413, 414, 416, 479, 482, 484, 490, 525
 Mysticism, 41, 101, 124, 172, 174, 176, 186, 187, 188, 192, 205, 240, 289, 297, 298, 304, 305, 313, 343, 413, 416, 417, 452, 454, 455, 483, 490
 Mythology, 91, 200, 231, 233, 237, 242, 244, 262, 266, 388
 Nad, 80, 127, 238
 Nadar, 241, 243, 255, 478
 Nagauri, Khwaja Husain, 210
 Nagauri, Shaikh Hamid-al-Din, 203, 210

- Nam, 66, 67, 69, 76-78, 127, 128, 133, 134, 157, 160, 161, 180, 184, 243, 316, 319, 358, 401, 478, 486, 491
- Namaz, 240, 488
- Namdev, 27, 141, 142, 214, 266, 302, 383, 452
- Name, 21, 42, 67, 69, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 84, 89, 90, 95, 98, 99, 103, 104, 107, 110, 112, 115, 117, 133, 138, 139, 160, 201, 204, 247, 251, 253, 254, 267, 269, 271, 272, 280, 282, 284, 285, 300, 358, 385, 386, 429, 433, 436, 474, 478
- Nanak of faith, 361, 362, 366-368
- Nanak of history, 361, 362, 365-368
- Nankana Sahib, 15, 18, 406, 427
- Narayana, 240, 279
- Nasir-al-Din Chirag-i-Dihli, Shaikh, 197, 199
- Nathapanthis, 59, 61, 62, 64, 66, 302
- Nathas, 269, 272, 298, 477, 506
- Nature, 50, 52-54
- Neoplatonist, 91
- New Testament, 111, 167, 483
- Nietzsche, 53
- Nigama, 128
- Niranjan, 130, 133, 235, 240, 294, 473, 475, 517
- Nirankar, 42, 240, 254, 314, 396, 397
- Nirbhau, 105, 107, 242, 485, 486, 529
- Nirguna, 61, 73, 85, 86, 105, 314, 369
- Nirvair, 105, 107, 242, 243, 485, 486, 529
- Nirvan, 61, 225, 252, 259, 290, 304, 306, 491
- Nizam-al-Din Auliya, Shaikh, 197, 199, 210-212
- Non-duality, 244, 246, 248, 254, 259
- Nyaya, 490
- Oankar, 237, 238, 243, 266, 267, 414
- Old Testament, 111, 504
- Ontological, 37
- Otto Rudolf, 174, 176
- Pakpattan, 24
- Pandavas, 88
- Panj Pyare, 507
- Pantheism, 99
- Paonta Sahib, 333
- Param Pad, 58, 134
- Parakramabahu, 326
- Parbati, 238, 244
- Parmatma, 235, 244
- Parmeshvara, 235, 240, 254, 294, 482
- Patna, 333
- Paul, 111
- Persians, 47, 53, 136, 385, 397
- Philosophy:
- Philosophy of History, 261
 - Philosophy of Life, 261
 - Philosophy of Name, 79
 - Philosophy of Religion, 353
 - Brahmanical Philosophy, 252, 295
 - Hindu Philosophy, 12, 388, 462, 530
 - Indian Philosophy, 1, 45, 46, 50, 54, 71, 76, 82, 156, 239, 252, 255
 - Monistic Philosophy, 185
 - Practical Philosophy, 409
 - Religious Philosophy, 409
 - Scholastic Philosophy, 232
 - Sikh Philosophy, 54, 76, 294
 - Thomistic Philosophy, 351
 - Vaishnava Philosophy, 473
 - Western Philosophy, 50, 87
- Pilgrimage, 20, 22, 36, 298, 303, 331, 409, 417, 440, 453, 459, 460, 462, 472, 495, 505, 526, 529
- Pir, 24, 130, 134, 140, 149, 151, 194, 202, 206, 295, 345, 403, 422, 472, 473, 479
- Plato, 84, 189, 305, 448
- Plotinus, 93, 97, 188
- Plurality, 72
- Polemical, 385, 386
- Polytheism, 241, 242
- Prakriti, 45-47, 49-51, 54, 71-73, 105, 106, 108, 245, 276, 297
- Primal Being, 299, 409
- Primitive, 225, 242
- Purakh, 47, 52, 243
- Puranas, 3, 87, 138, 206, 209
- Purnavatara, 88
- Purusa, 45-51, 105, 107, 108, 132, 234, 235, 240, 243, 245, 276, 297, 298
- Absolute Purusa, 50
 - Akal Purusa, 298
 - Immaculate Purusa, 249
 - Vedic Purusa, 50
- Qadiriya Order, 193, 199, 200, 213
- Quadrat, 45, 47, 52-54, 73, 108
- Quran, 52, 85, 137, 154, 191, 198, 201, 204, 206, 211, 244, 293, 300, 357, 382, 426, 438, 439, 474, 523
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli, 461
- Rai Bular, 19, 20, 328
- Rama, 235, 239, 240, 265-268, 473, 474, 495, 498-500
- Ramakrishna Mission, 341, 361
- Ramanand, 27, 302, 452, 469, 476
- Ramanuja, 87, 254, 375-378, 470, 475, 476
- Ramayana, 233, 244, 495, 498
- Ramcaritmanas, 495
- Ranjit Singh, 335, 408, 421, 426
- Rationalism, 12
- Ravana, 239, 265, 268, 398, 498
- Ravidas, 141, 214, 383, 420, 452
- Rawals, 269
- Raza, 323, 386
- Realism, 416
- Reality, 3, 51, 52, 71, 72, 74, 138, 139, 144, 182, 184, 185, 191, 193, 201, 240, 241, 246, 272, 273, 320, 428
- Absolute Reality, 59, 182, 198, 200
 - Divine Reality, 98, 127, 194
 - Immanent Reality, 439
 - Metaphysical Reality, 386
 - One Reality, 133
 - Suprational Reality, 386
 - Supreme Reality, 69, 77, 126-128, 235, 276, 282, 394, 486
 - Transcendent Reality, 62, 439
 - Ultimate Reality, 16, 37, 58-60, 62, 64, 68, 69, 74, 98, 105, 126, 128, 132, 160, 184, 189, 190
- Religion:
- Bhakti Religion, 87

- Classical Religions, 528
 Comparative Religion, 452
 Hindu Religion, 125
 Institutional Religion, 139
 Modern Religions, 528
 Mystical Religion, 87, 91
 Prophetic Religion, 91
 Sikh Religion, 12, 45, 76, 82, 140, 162, 223, 361, 408, 462, 493, 523, 525
 Theistic Religion, 91, 101, 168
 Definition of Religion, 350
 Essence of Religion, 350, 351
 History of Religion, 166, 353, 354, 363, 408
 Kernel of Religion, 170
 Parliament of Religions, 166, 355
 Philosophy of Religion, 353
 Plurality of Religions, 349, 351
 Science of Religion, 353
 Sociology of Religion, 502
 Soul of Religion, 354
 Renaissance, 447, 448, 450, 458
 Revelation, 85, 87, 89, 90, 111, 128, 131, 305, 306, 413, 431, 433
 Rewa Nath, 273
 Rigveda, 71
 Ritualism, 8, 313, 488, 522
 Roy, Raja Rammohan, 461
 Sabad, 15, 19, 20, 22, 28, 59, 65, 69, 76-78, 80, 89, 124, 126-129, 131-133, 142, 157, 159, 161, 170, 179-181, 185, 200, 243, 269, 358, 369, 478
 Sach, 58, 69, 130, 134, 156, 160
 Sadhna, 51, 58, 214, 420, 490, 501
 Saguna, 85, 86, 88, 89, 91, 105, 107, 108, 314, 414
 Sahaj, 57-66, 68, 69, 280, 297, 305, 306, 358, 477
 Sain, 214
 Sajjan, Shaikh, 23, 114, 370
 Sakti, 63, 64, 127, 245, 246, 253, 266, 274-276, 305
 Salvation, 89, 90, 102, 114, 128, 134, 140, 142, 178, 180, 188, 272, 274, 277, 312, 317, 353-355, 387, 429, 432, 454, 455, 460, 462, 463, 475, 478, 507
 Samkhya, 47-50, 73, 245, 272, 275, 276
 Samkhya Karika, 46, 47, 49
 Samkhya Pravacan, 46
 Samkhya Sutra, 46
 Samsara, 49, 51, 88, 284, 289, 375
 Samtosa, 300
 Samvaya, 51
 Sangat, 290, 425
 Sankara, 72, 73, 86, 87, 93, 95, 98, 235, 244, 264
 Sankrityayana, Rahul, 273
 Santokh Singh, 18, 382
 Sarang-Pani, 240
 Saraswati, Dayanand, 461
 Sat, 77, 80, 81, 107, 134, 358, 530, 533
 Sati-yuga, 236
 Satnam, 42, 80, 81, 105, 128, 133, 135, 240, 242, 314, 317, 358, 485, 486, 490, 491
 Satta, 26, 402
 Saviour, 90, 393
 Sayyad Mian Mir, 27, 331, 332
 Scepticism, 36-38
 Self, 69, 104, 108, 109, 130, 159, 179, 245
 Absolute self, 133, 209
 Cosmic self, 187
 Finite self, 104
 Highest self, 108
 Ideal self, 322
 Individual self, 52, 57, 60
 Infinite self, 104
 Real self, 322
 Universal self, 52, 57, 60, 186, 187
 Self-control, 318
 Self-consciousness, 50
 Self-denial, 319
 Self-introspection, 318
 Self-realization, 119, 317, 319, 323
 Self-surrender, 318-320
 Semitic, 84, 138, 201, 209, 252, 267, 288, 409, 504
 Sen, Keshab Chandra, 461
 Seva, 259, 262, 312
 Shah, Ahmad, 293
 Shia, 329, 337, 339, 342, 523
 Siddhas, 131, 140, 142, 143, 149, 202, 203, 262, 269, 274, 276, 281, 285, 299, 330, 389, 477
 Sikhism, 3, 7, 12, 13, 45, 51, 57, 76, 78, 79, 81, 124, 128, 129, 133, 140, 227, 228, 256, 288, 292, 296, 300-302, 304-307, 322-324, 328, 329, 331-333, 357, 358, 360, 362, 368, 369, 397, 408, 419, 442, 445, 452, 459-461, 463, 465, 476, 479, 487, 493, 494, 498, 500, 502, 504, 505, 507-509, 511, 512, 521-527
 Sikh Initiation, 505, 507, 511
 Sikh Scripture, 266, 299, 302, 306, 322, 386, 421, 462, 497, 526
 Sin, 74, 113, 114, 140, 238, 254, 267, 271, 317, 384, 422, 468
 Singh Sabha, 362
 Sirhind, 25
 Sis Ganj, 333
 Siva, 63, 64, 73, 100, 108, 125, 126, 138-140, 201, 209, 234, 235, 238, 244, 245, 253, 266, 267, 269, 273, 275, 298, 305, 473, 484, 487, 506
 Smith, Cantwell, 2, 4, 10, 41, 43, 44, 166
 Socrates, 93, 172, 182, 448
 Soul, 19, 94, 108, 114, 119, 122, 123, 125, 130, 214, 225, 230, 231, 233, 236, 237, 244-246, 251, 253-255, 258, 265-267, 274, 277, 283, 306, 307, 313, 315, 316, 326, 331, 383-386, 389, 414, 416, 417, 467, 498
 Individual soul, 253, 267, 416
 Supreme soul, 319, 402
 Universal soul, 267
 Spinoza, 93, 174, 298, 522
 Sri Aurobindo, 134
 Sri Chand, 339, 479, 526
 State:
 Absolute state, 58
 Deathless state, 58
 Fourth state, 58
 Sahaj state, 58
 Supreme state, 58

- Ultimate state, 58
 St. John, 132
 Stoic, 300
 Sufi, 24, 27, 59, 60, 98, 99, 130, 133, 137, 138, 140, 153, 191-200, 202-206, 208-214, 243, 329, 337, 339, 340, 345-383, 401, 402, 416, 452
 Sufism, 240
 Suhrawardi, Shaikh Shihab-al-Din, 197
 Sultanpur, 90, 399, 482-483, 488
 Sunnis, 523
 Sunya, 60, 108, 266, 276, 306
 Sunya. *Samadhi*, 266
 Sunyata, 49, 51, 65
 Superstition, 9, 12, 313, 362, 407, 418, 452, 453
 Tagore, Rabindranath, 68, 341, 514, 520
 Talwandi, 15, 18, 516
 Tantra, 238, 270, 272-274, 297
 Tantric, 61, 62, 64-69, 77, 79, 82, 125, 126, 212
 Taoism, 338
 Tap, 300
 Tathagata, 274
 Teja Singh, 89, 90
 Theology, 10, 166, 205, 210, 367, 388, 451
 Tibet, 164, 165
 Tillich, 31, 32
 Tirtha, 265, 268
 Tolstoi, 165
 Transcendent, 36, 52, 78, 81, 84, 86, 99, 112, 121, 144, 179-182, 305, 306, 315, 490, 498, 500
 Transmigration, 42, 49, 88, 90, 91, 128, 132, 134, 171, 209, 210, 252, 257, 264, 267, 315, 474
 Transubstantiation, 451, 456
 Triguna, 48, 254
 Trilochan, 214
 Trinity, 73, 85, 113, 234, 361
 Trumpp, E., 215, 360, 361
 Truth, 62, 67, 69, 90, 94, 97, 98, 101-103, 105, 113, 119, 128-130, 132-134, 138, 139, 145, 155-157, 160, 167-169, 174, 178, 179, 193, 198-202, 206, 210, 213, 216, 225, 238, 243-247, 252, 263, 272, 279, 282, 297, 299, 301, 306, 311, 317, 413, 429, 434, 442, 444, 445, 475, 485-487, 491, 530-533
 Turiapad, 58, 134, 297
 Turiya, 304, 306, 318
 Turks, 18, 23, 136, 137, 337, 401, 448
 Tzu, Chuang, 93
 Tzu, Lao, 93
 Udasin, 115
 Union, 90, 91, 132
 Unitarians, 453
 Universe, 53, 72, 73, 77, 85, 90, 100, 102, 105, 106, 108, 112, 121, 122, 132, 139, 144, 165, 193, 203, 206, 209, 225, 236, 259, 251, 290, 298, 306, 315, 318, 387
 Universal:
 Universal brotherhood, 461
 Universal love, 409
 Universal man, 78
 Universal message, 313
 Universal mind, 247
 Universal mother, 238
 Universal Soul, 244, 253, 254
 Universal Will, 323
 Upanisad, 71, 79, 84, 86, 133, 176, 181, 182, 231, 235, 244, 266, 304, 310, 357, 415, 417, 490
 Katha Upanisad, 267
 Mandukya Upanisad, 243, 267
 Vairag, 249, 316
 Vairagi, 281
 Vairag Panth, 269
 Vaishnavas, 59, 60, 68, 88, 125, 129, 134, 272, 274, 375, 376, 378, 493-501
 Vajrayana, 62, 273-275
 Varnasramadharm, 509, 510
 Vedanta, 51, 77, 78, 80, 86, 99, 300, 490
 Vedantin, 51, 52, 95, 98, 134, 490
 Vedas, 50, 128, 132, 138, 180, 201, 209, 234, 237, 238, 241, 243, 263, 264, 272, 310, 357, 431, 440, 441, 453, 455, 470, 474, 490, 494, 506, 515
 Vikaras, 316
 Visistadvaita, 51, 86, 254
 Vismad, 69, 163
 Visnu, 73, 100, 108, 109, 140, 199, 209, 230, 236, 240, 244, 247, 261, 264-267, 473, 474, 484, 487
 Vivekananda, Swami, 10, 166, 281, 400, 406, 461
 Will, 103, 104, 106, 117, 258, 299, 332, 509
 William, Monier, 164, 335
 Word, 8, 28, 69, 81, 89-91, 100, 102, 104, 110, 111, 117, 122, 126, 128-133, 135, 180, 202, 204, 206, 207, 209, 225, 238, 242, 245, 248, 251, 253, 263, 265, 272, 277, 279, 280, 282-284, 298, 299, 304, 315, 358, 430, 441, 478, 500
 Yoga, 61, 64, 65, 68, 69, 125, 134, 168, 176, 181, 231, 238, 243, 246, 248, 258, 259, 273, 275, 276, 278, 281, 282, 296-300, 302-305, 440, 506
 Bhakti Yoga, 178, 179, 305
 Classical Yoga, 296, 301, 305, 306
 Dhyana Yoga, 305
 Grihastha Yoga, 512
 Gurmat Yoga, 297, 307
 Gurmukhi Yoga, 297
 Hatha Yoga, 61, 63, 68, 131, 178, 198, 273, 281, 296, 299, 305, 308, 359
 Jnana Yoga, 178, 305
 Karma Yoga, 12, 178, 305, 489
 Kasta Yoga, 301
 Laya Yoga, 178, 305
 Mantra Yoga, 305
 Nath Yoga, 63
 Raja Yoga, 178, 281, 305, 512
 Sabda Yoga, 126, 179, 180
 Sahaj Yoga, 179, 297, 305, 306
 Sakti Yoga, 71, 305
 Samadhi Yoga, 305
 Samkhyas, 297

- Sannyasa Yoga, 512
 Tantra Yoga, 305
 Tantric Yoga, 68, 477
 Upasana Yoga, 178
 Yogis, 63, 65, 68, 114, 134, 143, 149,
 153, 163, 197, 198, 201, 206, 212, 230,
 231, 240, 244, 246, 250, 256, 258, 262,
 269-273, 276, 279, 280, 283, 296-300,
 302-305, 307, 330, 359, 403, 472, 477,
 478, 498, 506
 Hatha Yogis, 296
 Kanphata Yogis, 298, 477
 Nath Yogis, 63-69, 198, 199, 477
 Younghusband, Francis, 164-166, 168,
 169
 Zakariya, Baha-ud-Din, 24, 196, 197,
 208, 214
 Zoroastrians, 192
 Zwingli, 455, 456